Commentary
June 2005

Annihilating Terri Schiavo
Paul McHugh

The Anti-Semitic Disease
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The Life of Art—A Story
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Commentary

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June 2005

Letters from Readers

Intelligence

To the Editor:

With Gabriel Schoenfeld's point that the CIA's problems "originate in realms deeper than can be addressed by a reconfiguration of the organizational chart," we agree ["What Became of the CIA," March]. With his argument that a dramatic reform of our intelligence agencies and of the way in which they communicate with one another and with the President is unnecessary, we emphatically do not agree.

The 9/11 Commission, on which the two of us served as commissioners, thoroughly and exhaustively interviewed Michael Scheuer, whose book *Imperial Hubris* is criticized at length by Mr. Schoenfeld. On a number of factual issues, he was of real value. But much of what he had to say was not borne out by our investigation.

Melissa Boyle Mahle's inside view of the CIA, put forward in her book *Denial and Deception* and likewise discussed by Mr. Schoenfeld, has great merit. Personnel policies that ignore the kind of recruiting that would make the CIA more closely resemble the people and countries on which it spies, combined with the agency's fear of humiliation or worse for failure, make it risk-averse and sclerotic.

The 9/11 Commission recommended that the agency concentrate on rebuilding its analytic capabilities, building robust human-intelligence assets, vastly strengthening its language programs, and emphasizing the kind of diversity that will allow agents to blend better into the culture of the nations to which they are assigned.

These are not easy tasks. Nor could the commission do more than point out the priorities the CIA should set for itself and recommend a structure in which the director of the agency can focus on this critical task.

But nothing that the CIA may discover is of the slightest use to a President unless he gets the information, together with intelligence developed by the fourteen other agencies in the intelligence community—all combined to paint an intelligible picture.

This is exactly what was so dramatically missing before 9/11. As poor as much of our intelligence was, much of what *was* developed never got to either President Clinton or President Bush because it was generated in disparate and ineffectually coordinated agencies.

A National Counterterrorism Center and a National Intelligence Director will greatly increase the likelihood that vital intelligence will get to where it is needed and not be lost or hidden.

We on the 9/11 Commission found that the greatest failure before 9/11 was of imagination. We cannot mandate imagination; we could, and did, recommend a structure that will facilitate the effective use of imagination when it appears. And the Congress heeded our recommendation.

Jamie Gorelick
Washington, D.C.

Slade Gorton
Seattle, Washington

To the Editor:

Gabriel Schoenfeld believes that the CIA's "downhill" slide will require steps beyond the recent intelligence reorganization. I agree, but would add footnotes to each of his five points.

Mr. Schoenfeld cannot comprehend how Michael Scheuer (the no longer anonymous "Anonymous") could have come to head the agency's al-Qaeda team in the late 1990's. Scheuer has indeed said and written things (as Mr. Schoenfeld points out) that are decidedly anti-Semitic, that show a lust for carpet-bombing, and that draw bizarre parallels between Osama bin

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Why Is This Man Smiling?

"There is danger that, if the Court does not temper its doctrinaire logic with a little practical wisdom, it will convert the constitutional Bill of Rights into a suicide pact." Although U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson wrote these words back in 1949, he could have been talking about today's activist lawsuits to keep our defense and security agencies from dealing effectively with terrorists.

Some activist lawyers even confuse wartime enemies with U.S. citizens.

A case in point: the litigation brought on behalf of current U.S. detainee Salim Ahmed Hamdan, Osama bin Laden's personal driver, now held by the U.S. military and indicted for war crimes. Even though Mr. Hamdan has never set foot on American soil, a battalion of his supporters have successfully argued in U.S. court that he cannot be tried overseas before a military commission. They want this Yemeni citizen tried in a U.S. courtroom with the full array of procedural rights.

Among those backing his cause, and the cause of other al-Qaeda functionaries, are the American Civil Liberties Union, Center for Constitutional Rights, People for the American Way, and Human Rights First, along with members of the European Union Parliament.

Activist groups have filed dozens of other cases that undermine America's ability to thwart terrorist attacks. Unfortunately, some judges have agreed with them.

Why should al-Qaeda be winning battles in U.S. courts? No one has a "right" to wage war on America. The next time the ACLU, et al. and their celebrity spokesmen tell you not to "surrender" your rights, tell them you want our legal system to protect our freedom and our lives.

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Hamdan v. Rumsfeld
(U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit)
• Supported by CCR and PAW.
• Challenge to military's right to convene military tribunal to conduct war crimes trial of Osama bin Laden's close aide.

Humanitarian Law Project v. Ashcroft
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• Supported by CCR.
• Challenge to a provision of the USA Patriot Act that prohibits giving "expert advice or assistance" to groups designated by government as terrorist organizations.

Rasul v. Bush
(U.S. Supreme Court)
• Supported by CCR, ACLU and PAW.
• Claim that al-Qaeda and Taliban members being detained by U.S. overseas are entitled to invoke protections of U.S. Constitution in American courts.

Muslim Community Association v. Ashcroft
(U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan)
• Supported by ACLU.
• Challenge to a provision of the USA Patriot Act that gives anti-terrorism investigators the same investigational tools long enjoyed by grand juries.

Green v. Transportation Security Administration
(U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington)
• Supported by ACLU.
• Challenge to federal government's "no fly" list.

Center for National Security Studies v. Department of Justice
(U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit)
• Supported by ACLU, CCR and PAW.
• Challenge to confidentiality of names of post-9/11 detainees.

National Council of La Raza v. Ashcroft
(U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York)
• Supported by ACLU.
• Challenge to use of National Crime Information Center to track illegal aliens.

Gebin v. Mineta
(U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit)
• Supported by ACLU.
• Challenge to law requiring airport screeners to be U.S. citizens.

Sosa v. Alvarez-Machain
(U.S. Supreme Court)
• Supported by ACLU, CCR and PAW.
• Suit by suspected murderer of DEA agent, invoking international law to challenge his apprehension in Mexico by U.S. authorities.

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Laden and America's founding fathers. Yet in being willing to swim against the tide of the time and to see bin Laden not as just another terrorist but as the charismatic leader of a very major and dangerous movement, Scheuer showed himself to be, as Melissa Boyle Mahle puts it in her book cited by Mr. Schoenfeld, "one of the those great analysts who think outside the box."

A stubborn rebel against groupthink may have strange views, just as a creative artist may decide to cut off his own ear. It does not mean either is useless. But why did Scheuer head the CIA's al-Qaeda office, and why did he not have a boss who would scrap his nutty musings while listening to his insights—and who would tell him to publish his books *after* he retired? I have no explanation.

Mr. Schoenfeld's second example of CIA failure, Aldrich Ames, was identified in 1993 and caught in 1994 largely through the efforts of the CIA's Paul Redmond and his CIA/FBI team, after Redmond took over the moribund mole hunt in 1991. Ames had been able to spy for the KGB beginning in 1985 largely because CIA security and counter-intelligence was so uncoordinated (due to a mid-70's decentralization that had over-corrected for earlier excessive centralization).

The anger inside and outside the agency at Ames's betrayal was so intense that there were numerous demands on me, as CIA director from 1993 to 1995, to go beyond organizational changes; as one Senator put it to me, "Jim, just fire the first three people who come through the door." But the four officers who had made serious mistakes about Ames were already retired. In her generally fine book, Mahle joins the ya-shoulda-fired-somebody chorus. But I still maintain that the ancient Hebrews had it right: don't pick a human substitute to sacrifice for an unavailable guilty party; harass, at most, a goat.

Third, as Mr. Schoenfeld correctly observes, the CIA's reliance on the polygraph in the last few years has been highly, and randomly, destructive of many careers. The recent authoritative National Research Council report on the polygraph, cited by Mahle in her book, should now be enough to convince any objective observer that the use of this highly flawed instrument should be radically curtailed.

Fourth, ethnic and sexual quotas should have no place at the CIA, but ethnic and sexual diversity can be a major advantage in intelligence. Discriminating against women is both wrong and stupid—it halves (well, probably more than halves) the pool of able candidates. In addition, the fact that we are a nation of immigrants gives us an ability both to obtain analytical insights about other cultures and to use field officers of many ethnic backgrounds—advantages not available to most other intelligence services. Coming to the CIA in 1993, I found a superbly talented, and fairly diverse, pool of career people already in place: five of the eleven people directly reporting to me were women and one was an African-American man.

Mr. Schoenfeld's last point, about risk-taking, is central. But the propensity during political flaps for some in Congress and the executive branch to erect barriers to CIA risk-taking and to deny clearly needed resources has been around since the mid-70's Church-Pike hearings in the Senate. During my two years as director of Central Intelligence (DCI), however, this reached heights I hope are never again achieved.

In 1993, Congress was in session 195 days and I had 205 appointments on Capitol Hill. Then the pace picked up. Most of this had to do with my efforts to reverse budget cuts or to stop proposed pieces of legislation, generally coming from Dennis DeConcini of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence but sometimes inspired by the executive branch, that would seriously damage intelligence: limits on the CIA's ability to spy on foreign intelligence services, cuts in funds for Arabic- and Farsi-language instruction, cuts in satellites and in supercomputers for National Security Agency code-breaking. I could virtually never get White House assistance (except from Vice President Al Gore) in these fights.

After two years of this, as Mahle writes, my resignation surprised the White House. It should not have. Intelligence heads cannot defeat these perennial assaults on their own; Presidents need to decide, or be urged by resignations to decide, to be the playing coach of the intelligence team. Nothing else will work.

R. JAMES WOOLSEY
McLean, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to commend COMMENTARY and Gabriel Schoenfeld for devoting so much attention to the topic of the CIA's weaknesses and the need for reform. The primary goal of my book, *Denial and Deception*, was to shine a bit of light on the issues affecting CIA performance during the 1990's, to give context to the intelligence failure of September 11, and to further the national debate on intelligence reform. In the spirit of this debate, I have several comments on Mr. Schoenfeld's article.

Mr. Schoenfeld asserts that the CIA's poor performance was due in part to affirmative-action programs and the hiring of less-than-qualified officers to do the work. While I am flattered that Mr. Schoenfeld extensively quotes my work, I am disconcerted by the impression he leaves that these are the conclusions I drew in *Denial and Deception*. They are not.

Transformation of the workforce was indeed an organizational goal during the 1990's, and a necessary one in my opinion. By no longer limiting the opportunity to serve to white males, and by leveling the playing field for assignments and promotions through performance-based criteria, the CIA created a more diverse workforce capable of meeting the challenges of the post-cold-war world.

Today, we bemoan the insufficient numbers of fluent Arabic- and Pashtu-speaking CIA officials. But the CIA would have no native foreign-language speakers at all in its case-officer ranks if the old-boy network had kept its absolute control over "qualifications" necessary for entry. Furthermore, excluding 50 percent of brain power through

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sex-biased personnel practices meant denying the CIA a broader range of options and opportunities to deploy against current and emerging national-security threats, some traditional but many more transnational and asymmetrical.

Second, Mr. Schoenfeld implies that I consider Michael Scheuer's assessment of Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda to be faulty. This is inaccurate. Scheuer is one of the few analysts who got bin Laden right. His 2002 book, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, is an excellent and detailed exploration of bin Laden's personal and ideological development, drawn together by a careful study of his statements and writings and of those close to him.

But Scheuer's assessment should not be confused with the CIA's assessment. The CIA was (and is) stuck in the analytical assessment that bin Laden is a terrorist, and al Qaeda is a terrorist organization. This is wrong. Bin Laden is an ideologue, who uses terror tactics to wage a war against the West as part of a larger agenda of establishing a worldwide community that adheres to his virulent interpretation of Islam.

We are facing an insurgency. Operational methods like renditions and targeted killings are effective against terrorists, but these alone will not stop an insurgency. The U.S. government is only now beginning to devise a counterinsurgency strategy that will discredit the ideology, promote ideological alternatives, and undercut the recruiting effort by addressing the social, political, and economic issues driving discontent in the Islamic world.

So what really ails the CIA? Mr. Schoenfeld finally addresses some of the substantive issues after several thousand words of distracting preamble. Over the course of the 1990's, the CIA has been institutionally weakened by poor management and bad intelligence policy. DCI George Tenet failed to marshal the resources of the community to wage a real "war on terrorism" by neglecting to commission a National Intelligence Assessment (NIE) on al Qaeda. Without the NIE, the intelligence community was denied the vehicle for a bottom-up review of the nature of the threat and the means to warn policymakers comprehensively on its breadth.

Tenet also failed to marshal the resources of the CIA by understaffing the Counterterrorism Center (CTC). Between 1998 and 2000, only three CIA analysts were focused exclusively on al Qaeda. (Mr. Schoenfeld uses the term "officers," which encompasses all disciplines, but the numbers are bad enough and do not need to be exaggerated.) Tenet and the senior management did not listen to the repeated pleas coming from CTC for additional personnel in all job categories.

As Mr. Schoenfeld correctly points out, policies adopted in the 1990's made CIA officers afraid to perform their jobs aggressively. Growing risk aversion, political correctness, and systematic dismantling of covert-action capabilities destroyed the CIA's capabilities to wage a real war on Islamic extremism.

MELISSA BOYLE MAHLE
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

First, allow me to thank COMMENTARY and Gabriel Schoenfeld for devoting so much space to my work and ideas. Clearly, Mr. Schoenfeld examined my book, *Imperial Hubris*, closely. His fine read allowed him to pick just the right snippets to support his assertions, distortions, and spin. If COMMENTARY's readers want to believe that those snippets accurately represent either the argument or the well-documented content of the book, so be it. I see no need to defend my work against a writer who clearly was uninterested in, or unable to understand, the ideas in the context in which they were presented.

As I recall, Mr. Schoenfeld's style is much the same style of research/spin engaged in by the Pentagon officials Douglas Feith and Paul Wolfowitz to prove the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and the state-sponsor/surrogate relationship between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. I admit I am a bear of little brain, and my less than sterling mind cannot hope to compete with that kind of research.

Second, I thought Mr. Schoenfeld's attempt to defame and scapegoat the CIA for the mistakes of the two individuals listed above, and the cohort they represent, to be clever and subtle. Well done. By suggesting there is something wrong with any organization that would allow me to hold a responsible position, he is of course suggesting that the CIA's new director, Porter Goss, really needs to clean up the agency, especially if any of its officers dare to think the perfectly obvious but doctrinally unacceptable thought that a one-way alliance with Israel has long burdened U.S. relations with the Islamic world and is now getting Americans killed.

But the fact is that Porter Goss would have an overwhelming clean-up job only if this knowledge were *not* common among agency officers. Fortunately, that task does not fall on Mr. Goss's very full plate; all agency officers always remember that their passports are issued in Washington and not in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem.

Third, readers might like some checkables about why I was given a series of responsible positions over the course of my CIA career. Between 1992 and 1999, for example, the officers working in the units I led, in cooperation with agency officers overseas, helped to capture Talat Fuad Qassem, Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, Wali Khan Amin Shah, and Hakim Murad; broke up Ramzi Yousef's plot to down fourteen U.S. airliners over the Pacific; destroyed al-Qaeda cells in Africa, the Balkans, and the Caucasus; virtually destroyed the outside-Egypt wing of Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad; supplied all of the information used in the federal indictment of Osama bin Laden; and provided all—repeat, all—of the chances that the United States has ever had to capture or kill bin Laden.

There is no need to take my word for any of this: check with the CIA and the citation accompanying my Intelligence Commendation Medal, and, for the last item, read the 9/11 Commission Report.

Responsibility for these successes, of course, rests overwhelmingly with the officers I was privileged to

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lead—most of whom were women—and to their colleagues overseas. Still, I can at least claim some small credit for not getting in the way as those officers strove to protect America, notwithstanding the willful failure of President Clinton's National Security Council team to show the same interest in protecting American lives.

Finally, I would be delighted to stack the quality of my research, as well as the accuracy of my judgments, against any the editors of COMMENTARY might care to conduct now or in the future. Condemnation, denigration, personal abuse, and selective quotation, as Mr. Schoenfeld so brilliantly demonstrates, are easy—the tools of the zealot, propagandist, and ideologue. I am comfortable to leave that sort of work to Mr. Schoenfeld and his kind, while those of us in private life and the U.S. intelligence community seek to understand bin Laden and the dire threat he represents to the United States and its allies, including Israel.

Who knows? While the ideologues and propagandists shovel dirt, perhaps the rest of us will defeat bin Laden and prevent, say, a nuclear attack on America. Even Mr. Schoenfeld and his like should approve of this, because bin Laden's obvious intentions after a nuclear attack in the United States would give a whole new meaning to that old saying, "next year in Jerusalem."

MICHAEL SCHEUER
Washington, D.C.

GABRIEL SCHOENFELD writes:

Jamie Gorelick and Slade Gorton, two distinguished members of the 9/11 Commission, agree that the problems of the CIA reside in realms that cannot be readily addressed by mere reorganization. But they "emphatically do not agree" with the proposition that intelligence reform is unnecessary.

I never said it was unnecessary. I did raise questions about the wisdom of grafting a new layer of bureaucracy on top of the CIA, as their commission proposed, and as Congress has done. The damage caused by this "reform" is likely to be compounded by the fact that the new position of National Intelligence Director has been invested with immense responsibility for our national security but only limited power to exercise that responsibility, setting the stage for chaos or drift or both.

The establishment of a coordinated inter-agency counterterrorism center, which Jamie Gorelick and Slade Gorton also endorse, is a far more reasonable step. But, in the final analysis, unless a much more far-reaching transformation of the basic culture of the U.S. intelligence community is effectuated, we will remain vulnerable to egregious failures of our own design (not to mention the designs of our enemies).

When the OSS was established during World War II, its founders were able to draw on the cream of the American elite—including some of the best minds from the faculties of the best universities—to create a flexible, highly effective, and imaginative intelligence organization. But in the decades since World War II, the caliber of the CIA staff has declined, and the elite universities, having changed almost beyond recognition, would hardly seem to offer an attractive pool from which to draw new talent. It is not at all obvious which segment of American society the CIA should today turn to, although those in the armed forces who have put their lives on the line in Afghanistan and Iraq would surely bring more daring, and more patriotism, to the fight against Islamic terrorism than are likely to be found on the faculties of Harvard or Yale.

I greatly appreciate R. James Woolsey's thoughtful and illuminating comments. But I do have reservations about two points. First, Mr. Woolsey writes that "ethnic and sexual diversity can be a major advantage in intelligence." In this he echoes Jamie Gorelick and Slade Gorton, who stress that the CIA should build a staff that "more closely resembles the people and countries on which it spies." But while this particular kind of "diversity" would indeed be welcome, it is hardly what the CIA's affirmative-action program in the Clinton era was all about.

As I tried to show, at the very moment that the agency was purportedly gearing up for a war on Islamic terrorism, and at the very same time that it was facing a critical shortage of Arabic speakers, the CIA's leadership put in place a "strategic diversity plan" with the goal of making the composition of its workforce match that not of target societies but of the larger U.S. workforce. This led it to recruit not more Arabic speakers, scarce and much needed though these were, but more Hispanics and persons of "Asian-Pacific" origin. This was politically correct, and pointless.

My second demurral concerns Michael Scheuer, whose own letter to COMMENTARY appears above. Mr. Woolsey makes no bones about Scheuer's "decidedly anti-Semitic" pronouncements, but suggests that he is nevertheless one of "those great analysts who think outside the box," if one who needed to be kept under adequate supervision. To my mind, however, if an analyst is spouting nonsense, including anti-Semitic nonsense, it is hazardous to take seriously anything coming out of his mouth, even if some of what he has to say happens sometimes to be on the money.

That is precisely what happened in this case. Mr. Scheuer has severely embarrassed the CIA, both by publishing a book that agency officials themselves regarded as "ludicrous" and through his various public statements in the months since his resignation from the agency. As for whether he is even a great analyst, I will have more to say about this below.

Melissa Boyle Mahle similarly offers high praise for Mr. Scheuer. She calls his earlier book, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, "excellent," and applauds him for bravely dissenting from the CIA consensus on Osama bin Laden. This strikes me as an evasion.

For one thing, I did not criticize *Through Our Enemies' Eyes* at all. I focused instead on some of the many preposterous statements contained in Mr. Scheuer's second book, *Imperial Hubris*, about which she is completely silent. For another thing, her praise of Mr. Scheuer's as-

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sessment of Osama bin Laden is difficult to credit.

It is unfortunate, according to Melissa Boyle Mahle, that the agency today remains "stuck" in the idea "that bin Laden is a terrorist, and [that] al Qaeda is a terrorist organization"—propositions that in her opinion are "wrong." Here she seems at best to be opening up a pointless semantic dispute and at worst to be lambasting the CIA for one of the few (if obvious) things it has understood correctly. Nevertheless, she is right that Mr. Scheuer does indeed hold a dissenting view of bin Laden. In *Imperial Hubris*, as I pointed out in my article, he calls bin Laden "generous, talented, and personally courageous," and also "gentle." I am still wondering where this comes from; I doubt even bin Laden's own mother views him in such rosy terms.

This brings me to Mr. Scheuer himself, whose missive to COMMENTARY offers further evidence, if any were required, that I was correct to point to his "demonstrable mediocrity of mind" and to his "unhinged views." Unfortunately, he now compounds these deficiencies by calling into question his own integrity.

Although Mr. Scheuer begins by disclaiming any need to defend himself against my charges, he then oddly reverses field. In my article, he asserts, I cherry-picked "snippets" from his book in order to support my own "distortions" of his views. Yet he makes not the slightest effort to place any of those alleged snippets in what he regards as their full and proper context, or to demonstrate any of my alleged distortions or "spin." Readers are thus left to determine for themselves who is the more credible.

In aid of that process, I would recommend focusing on Mr. Scheuer's list of the counterterrorism feats that he and CIA officers working under his command were able to accomplish. Telling us that there is "[n]o need to take my word for any of this," he urges us to verify the "checkables" with the CIA itself, to review the citation accompanying his Intelligence Commendation Medal, and to study the relevant portions of the 9/11 Commission report.

I have done, or attempted to do, all three. For starters, the CIA declined to comment on Mr. Scheuer's claims about his career—as he surely knew it would do. As for the citation accompanying his medal, not only Mr. Scheuer himself but the CIA's public-affairs office has rejected requests to see a copy of this supposedly corroborative document. A helpful CIA officer did inform me, however, that the citation itself is unclassified, which means that Mr. Scheuer is free to release it if he likes. One can only wonder why, after calling our attention to it, he does not.

The same officer told me that the medal in question was awarded in 1995. That is one year *before* Mr. Scheuer was assigned to the Osama bin Laden unit. It is also well before he could have accomplished a number of the triumphs that he suggests are cited in the commendation, like supplying "all of the information used in the federal indictment of Osama bin Laden." Bin Laden was indicted in 1998, three years after Mr. Scheuer's medal was minted.

Things get even worse when we turn, as Mr. Scheuer proposes, to the 9/11 Commission Report. According to my correspondents Jamie Gorelick and Slade Gorton, the commissioners "thoroughly and exhaustively interviewed Michael Scheuer." Their carefully phrased conclusion: "On a number of factual issues, he was of real value. But *much* of what he had to say was *not* borne out by our investigation" (emphasis added). This independent, bipartisan verdict on Mr. Scheuer's credibility—Gorelick is a liberal Democrat, Gorton a conservative Republican and former U.S. Senator, and both are highly experienced attorneys—could not be more unequivocal: many of Mr. Scheuer's "checkables" do not check out.

I do not know why Mr. Scheuer behaves the way he does. But I have a hunch. Consider the reference in his letter to two high-ranking Pentagon officials, Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith, and to "the cohort they represent." I did not mention either Wolfowitz or Feith in my article. Nevertheless, Mr. Scheuer conspicuously drags their names into the discussion, links their "style" to mine, asserts that I am trying to "scapegoat" the CIA for their misdeeds, and claims that one of those misdeeds involved pressuring CIA analysts concerning the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

As it happens, this last allegation is a "checkable." On it, the findings of the WMD Commission, headed by Laurence Silberman and Charles Robb, are clear:

> [W]e closely examined the possibility that intelligence analysts were pressured by policymakers to change their judgments about Iraq's nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons programs. The analysts who worked Iraqi weapons issues universally agreed that in *no instance* did political pressure cause them to skew or alter any of their analytical judgments" [emphasis added].

In insisting to the contrary without adducing a shred of evidence, Mr. Scheuer is making stuff up as he goes along, which is not exactly the trademark of a "great analyst." But he is not making up just any old stuff. As is well known, a campaign has been under way in Europe, the Arab world, and in right- and left-wing circles here at home to demonize Wolfowitz and Feith (along with others in the government in the same "cohort"), suggesting that these two Jewish officials owe their loyalty to the state of Israel and have done its bidding by ramming through policies against the American interest and only nominally authorized by such higher-ranking, non-Jewish officials as Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice, Richard Cheney, and George W. Bush.

In short, Michael Scheuer is in the grip of a conspiratorial world view in which Jews, operating through the Jewish state, are clandestinely attempting to run American policy from behind the scenes. He believes, as he writes in *Imperial Hubris*, that in pursuit of this nefarious aim the government of Israel makes use not

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Diadem, robe,
and linen breeches,
Breastpiece, ephod,
royal headdress and sash;

sacrifice of bulls
and burnt-offerings of sheep
and the slaughter of goats
and the cutting up of rams.

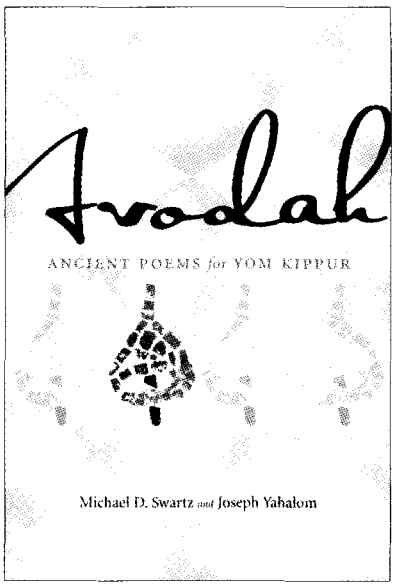
the aroma (of incense)
and the burning of coals
correct enumeration
and the dashing of blood;

supplication at the incense
and true prayer;
and his holiness,
which atones for our sins;

The measurement of fine linen
and the arrangement of jewels—
he is girded in all of these
like a ministering angel.

You ordained all these
for the glory of Aaron,
you made him
the instrument of atonement.

—Excerpt of poetry from *Avodah*



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only of "wealthy Jewish-American organizations" but of "diplomats, politicians, intelligence services, [and] U.S. citizen spies" in order to "lac[e] tight the ropes binding the American Gulliver to the Jewish state." Only a cadre of brave CIA officers, he tells us now in his letter, can be trusted to know that their passports "are issued in Washington and not in Tel Aviv."

Speaking before the Council on Foreign Relations in New York on February 3, 2005, Mr. Scheuer elaborated on this grotesque theory. There he explained that Israel is engaged in what is "probably the most successful covert-action program in the history of man," the object of which is to control not just policy but political debate in the United States. When pressed to identify some of these "covert" activities, he pointed in the first instance to the establishment of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. For anyone who doubts that Mr. Scheuer could actually give voice to such lunatic ideas, a checkable transcript of his remarks is available at www.cfr.org.

I thank all of my correspondents for their contributions to the discussion.

Sticks and Stones?

TO THE EDITOR:

Andrew C. McCarthy's "Free Speech for Terrorists?" [March] discusses at some length my book, *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime*, and argues that the courts have taken the principle of free speech too far.

As Mr. McCarthy observes, the Supreme Court's 1969 decision in *Brandenburg* v. *Ohio* held that the government cannot constitutionally proscribe even the express advocacy of violence "except where such advocacy is directed to inciting or producing imminent lawless action and is likely to incite or produce such action." But as he himself sees it, "moral clarity" demands that we acknowledge that "some evils are so palpable" that their advocacy simply must be banned. We should not insist that the danger be "imminent" or "likely." As he asks, what possible constitutional value can there be in "the advocacy of murder" or in "militant Islam's clarion call to violent jihad"? Why shouldn't such speech simply be declared unlawful?

These are good and fair questions. And for much of our history, American constitutional law has sided with Mr. McCarthy. How, then, can the First Amendment be reasonably—indeed, properly—understood to protect "free speech for terrorists"?

At the outset, it is important to emphasize that a robust protection of free speech does not have to render government impotent to protect the public safety. Short of proscribing expression, government can and does take many steps to defuse or prevent danger. Most obviously it can prohibit the possession or sale of dangerous weapons, increase the resources available to law enforcement, enhance the penalties for particular crimes, and aggressively arrest and prosecute those who threaten or conspire to commit them. A basic premise of the First Amendment is that the suppression of speech must be a last resort.

In any case, truly dangerous individuals generally do not broadcast their criminal intent. Those who do publicly advocate violence, by contrast, for the most part pose no serious danger to the nation. Their advocacy is usually mere rhetoric, designed to convey depth of passion. It hardly seems sensible to make hyperbole illegal. Of course, a truly dangerous individual might publicly proclaim his criminal intent, but is that so bad? It would mark him as dangerous and make it easy for government to keep watch over him.

But the question remains: is there any reason to accord constitutional *protection* to speech that expressly advocates the use of force or violence to effect political change? Isn't such expression a betrayal of the very constitutional system that the First Amendment was intended to promote? What would we lose by outlawing it? The answer, which Mr. McCarthy wrongly dismisses, was provided by Justice Felix Frankfurter, who pointed out that the advocacy of violence is often "coupled" with sharp "criticism of defects in our society." Thus, there is a serious "public interest . . . in granting freedom to speak their minds even to those who advocate the overthrow of the government by force." Put differently, unless there is a compelling reason to punish such advocacy, we are better off leaving it alone so that we do not incidentally suppress criticism that it might be good for us to hear—either because it contains some kernel of truth or because it helps us understand our enemies.

Mr. McCarthy might charge that I am evading the issue—that his concern is not with some harmless revolutionary but with "militant Islam's clarion call to violent jihad." So, suppose we embraced his "solution" and directly prohibited the express advocacy of "the indiscriminate mass slaughter of civilians." Does he think that Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman could not have issued his *fatwa* without resorting to such words? Mr. McCarthy's proposed rule would have no effect on terrorism; any terrorist worth fearing could easily circumvent it.

In truth, the only way to suppress potentially dangerous advocacy is to prohibit any speech that is *intended* to incite unlawful conduct. But we have been down that road before. Inquiring into the subjective intent of unpopular or hateful speakers is a slippery business that inevitably leads to the suppression of valuable dissent. Those who say that the United States "got what it deserved on 9/11," or that "Israel caused the war on terrorism," or that "Bush is destroying the Middle East for oil" would be vulnerable to criminal prosecution on the charge that they "intend" to inspire terrorist acts. Surely Mr. McCarthy does not want us to return to the days, documented in my book, when the United States prosecuted thousands of dissenters on the premise that their criticisms were "intended" to foster violence. But that is where his way of thinking would take us.

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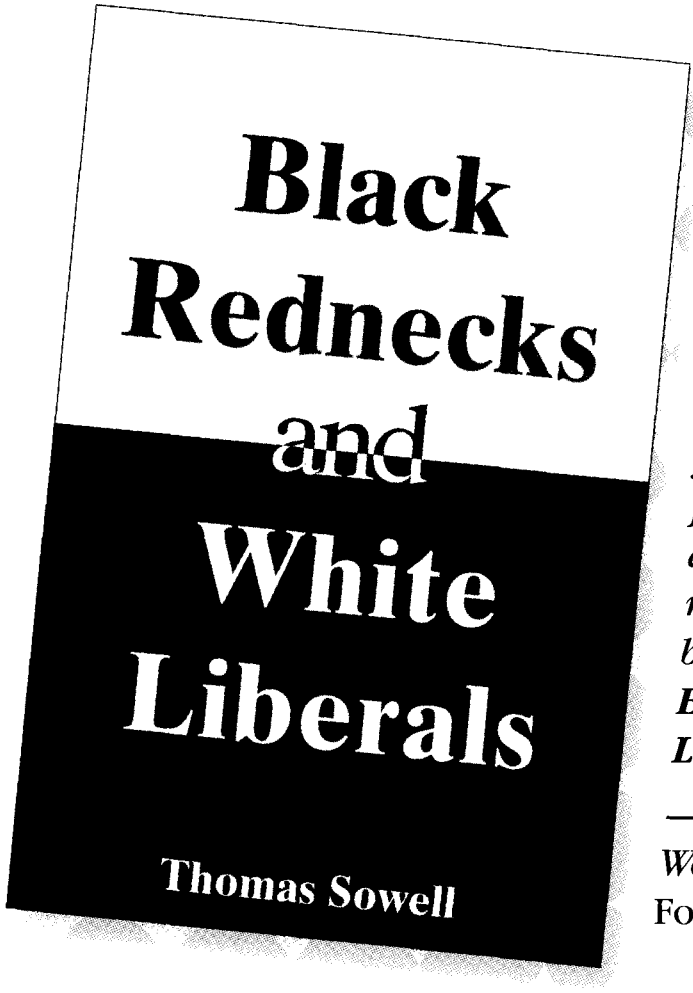

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TO THE EDITOR:

In 1925, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said, and in some circles became famous for saying, "if, in the long run, the beliefs expressed in proletarian dictatorship are destined to be accepted by the dominant forces in the community, the only meaning of free speech is that they shall be given their chance and have their way." In other words, anything goes, and Holmes did not care how it went—or, giving him the benefit of the doubt, the Constitution did not permit him, as a Supreme Court Justice, to care how it went. This is absurd, but it does state the problem facing Andrew C. McCarthy in his essay, "Free Speech for Terrorists?"

Mr. McCarthy would solve it by insisting that there is a constitutionally significant difference between Communism and militant Islam. Respecting the latter, he says, the "nexus" between "advocacy and actual savagery" is an empirical fact. Thus, if advocacy *is* savagery, or if speech *is* the deed, it follows that "advocacy of terrorism can be effectively regulated." In this way, he avoids the problem that certain liberals—those who treat rights as "trumps"—are unable to solve, namely, how to limit a right. For them, if freedom of speech is a right protected by the Constitution, there is no way to limit it. Mr. McCarthy avoids this problem by, in effect, denying that jihadist speech is speech.

Had he chosen to confront the issue directly, Mr. McCarthy might have said that the problem exists for absolutist liberals only because they treat civil rights, like freedom of speech and press, as if they were *natural* rights, the unlimited rights we supposedly "enjoyed" in the "state of nature." In fact, of course, we did not enjoy them. Without government, natural rights were insecure precisely because there was no entity to regulate and protect them from the war of "every man against every man." One of the blessings of government is that it can, by due process of law, regulate what we say and print.

But Mr. McCarthy, wisely perhaps, makes his case for regulation in terms that at least some liberals might find congenial, invoking the celebrated jurist Learned Hand. Before Justice Holmes became a free-speech ideologue, he had formulated in 1925 the "clear-and-present-danger" test according to which speech might be regulated. Thirty-one years later, Hand reformulated Holmes's test; the key question, he said, was "whether the gravity of the 'evil,' discounted by its improbability, justifies such invasion of free speech as is necessary to avoid the evil." Mr. McCarthy rightly sees the virtue of this rule: it requires the judge to focus on the evil, to accord it the weight it deserves.

The evil in Hand's day was Stalinism and its friends in the American Communist party. Liberals of that time can perhaps be excused for discounting, if not the evil, then the possibility of its taking hold in the United States. No one, other than a fool or a knave, could discount the threat facing us today from militant Islam.

WALTER BERNS
American Enterprise Institute
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TO THE EDITOR:

Andrew C. McCarthy may give the First Amendment more of an encomium than it deserves. The reason "free speech" is "enshrined in the very first amendment to the Constitution" is not that it shines "so luminous . . . among our values" but only that the first two amendments proposed by the first Congress were not ratified. The framers of the Constitution may have "fully understood" the need for an "exchange of ideas" in a democracy, but that did not stop many of them, serving in the first Congress, from enacting the 1798 Sedition Act, which penalized false criticism of the President. That law may be unanimously abominated today, but it was upheld by every Supreme Court Justice, Federalists all, who considered it.

Constitutional restrictions are generally a bad idea. As Alexander Hamilton pointed out, it is unclear why, in a democracy, the people would want to limit their ability to make policy choices or, indeed, how they are able to do so if they remain the sovereign. Constitutional restrictions work best, our history shows, when seen as advice to legislators rather than as judge-enforceable law. The First Amendment in particular—which, as Mr. McCarthy notes, cannot mean what it says in stating that Congress "shall make no law" abridging the freedoms of speech and press—belongs more "in a treatise of ethics than in a constitution of government," as Hamilton also pointed out. Any failure on our part to protect ourselves from terrorism cannot be attributed to the First Amendment.

Today's constitutional law of "free speech," like nearly all of our constitutional law, derives not from the Constitution but from the constitutional revolution—based on the political principles of the 1960's—worked by the Warren (or, more accurately, Brennan) Court and followed and expanded ever since. Justice Hugo Black purported to adopt the "absolutist" position that the First Amendment prohibits all governmental (state as well as federal) regulation of "speech," including pictorial pornography and wearing an armband in a grade-school classroom. Most of his colleagues, reluctant to be seen as less liberal, accepted or came close to accepting this position. Thus it came to be in 1969 that the First Amendment (which refers only to "Congress") was seen to prohibit the state of Ohio from making it a crime to "advocate or teach the duty, necessity, or propriety of crime, sabotage, violence, or unlawful methods of terrorism" for political ends. It made no difference that less than twenty years earlier a similar federal statute (used to convict the leaders of the American Communist Party) was upheld.

There is no good reason why the views of Justice Black and his colleagues of the 1960's should determine American public policy on terrorism (or anything else) today. The issue should be decided, like all issues in a democracy, by the views of the people

LINO A. GRAGLIA
University of Texas
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TO THE EDITOR:

It is a measure of the disorder in First Amendment

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- Second, arguments fall into a handful of distinctive categories—and the same issues are at stake each time one of these distinctive patterns occurs.
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Dr. Zarefsky is the Owen L. Coon Professor of Argumentation and Debate and Professor of Communication Studies at Northwestern University, where he has taught for over 30 years. The Student Government of Northwestern has elected Professor Zarefsky to the Honor Roll for Teaching *12 times*. A nationally recognized authority on rhetoric and argumentation, he has won several national awards for his own successes in debate and argumentation, and has coached National Championship debaters at Northwestern University. He is also a distinguished author on communications. The National Communication Association has twice given its Award for Distinguished Scholarship in Rhetoric and Public Address to Dr. Zarefsky.

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jurisprudence that the title of Andrew C. McCarthy's article should end with a question mark. Free speech for terrorists? Freedom to call for the murder of Americans? Common sense replies, "Of course not." The Supreme Court's reply, however, has been considerably less forthright; it is not at all clear that the Court would uphold a law enforcing the blanket suppression of terrorist calls for violence. And that disjunction between sensible precaution and the current state of the law suggests that something in First-Amendment doctrine has gone badly askew.

The problem started with the much-admired dissenting opinions, primarily in the 1920's, of Justices Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. and Louis Brandeis. They insisted that courts were the final arbiters of the dangers of advocating violence and lawbreaking. More important, they held that a judgment had to be made concerning each separate episode of such speech. Supreme Court majorities in that era disagreed; the Justices ruled that if a legislature had reasonably defined dangerous categories of speech, advocacy that fell within those categories could be punished. It was apparent then, and is even clearer now, that the majorities were right and that Holmes and Brandeis were wrong.

Holmes and Brandeis asked whether particular instances of speech created a "clear and present danger" of lawless action. After much doctrinal wavering, the basic element of that test was adopted in *Brandenburg* v. *Ohio* (1969), which overturned the conviction of a Ku Klux Klan leader for inciting racial violence. In an unsigned opinion, a unanimous Court held that "the constitutional guarantees of free speech and free press do not permit a state to forbid or proscribe advocacy of the use of force or law violation except where such advocacy is directed to inciting or producing imminent lawless action and is likely to incite or produce such action."

The *Brandenburg* formula requires judges to estimate such matters as the danger posed by an al Qaeda leader's call for jihad in America, or the mood of a crowd hearing incitement to racial violence. These are tasks for which the judiciary is the least qualified branch of government.

Matters would be improved if the Supreme Court followed the example of its own decisions in *Gitlow* v. *New York* (1925), which upheld a conviction for advocating the violent overthrow of the government, and *Chaplinsky* v. *New Hampshire* (1942), which upheld a conviction for offensive words likely to cause a breach of the peace. The *Gitlow* majority said that "when the legislative body has determined generally, in the constitutional exercise of its discretion, that utterances of a certain kind involve such danger of substantive evil that they may be punished, the question whether any specific utterance coming within the prohibited class is likely, in and of itself, to bring about the substantive evil, is not open to consideration." The unanimous *Chaplinsky* opinion gave the rationale for regulating speech by way of such categories: "[Some] utterances are no essential part of any exposition of ideas, and are of such slight social value as a step to truth, that any benefit that may be derived from them is clearly outweighed by the social interest in order and morality." Advocacy of terrorism surely fits that description; what social value is served by the *fatwas* of a Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman?

Holmes denied the very proposition of *Chaplinsky* when he wrote that "if in the long run the beliefs expressed in proletarian dictatorship are destined to be accepted by the dominant forces of the community, the only meaning of free speech is that they should be given their chance and have their way." He apparently valued free speech so highly that he was willing to see it ended by dictatorship. Only First Amendment voluptuaries, a type of which we have more than a sufficiency, can adopt that position today.

ROBERT H. BORK
American Enterprise Institute
Washington, D.C.

ANDREW C. MCCARTHY writes:

Geoffrey R. Stone stands second to no one in his mastery of modern First Amendment jurisprudence. Nonetheless, his grasp of modern militant Islam is even more lacking than his appreciation of the Communist threat—which, as his generally superb book confirms, is badly wanting.

It is difficult to understand how anyone who has been paying attention for the last dozen years could say that "truly dangerous individuals generally do not usually broadcast their criminal intent" or that those who "publicly advocate violence . . . for the most part pose no serious danger to the nation." In point of fact, truly dangerous individuals—whose victims now number in the thousands—broadcast their criminal intent all the time: issuing *fatwas*, brazenly calling for suicide bombings, and even videotaping their savage beheadings as a recruitment tool and an intimidation device. Mr. Stone asks, "is that so bad?" I think it is. And I doubt that most people would equate it with "hyperbole" or "mere rhetoric designed to convey depth of passion."

Free speech is not an end in its own right. It is a vital means to the end of a healthy body politic. Nostrums like "[a] basic premise of the First Amendment is that the suppression of speech must be a last resort" simply beg the question: a last resort against *what*? As is bound to happen when nostrums crash into reality, it turns out that society has decided there are quite a number of values to which this "last resort" must give way, including comparative trifles like reducing expenditures on political campaigns.

That is because—as Walter Berns, Lino A. Graglia, and Robert H. Bork observe—speech is not an absolute but a question of competing values. What value does the terrorist call to violent jihad bring to our marketplace of ideas? Mr. Stone suggests it may contain "criticism that it might be good for us to hear—either because it contains some kernel of truth or because it helps us understand our enemies." This entirely discounts the grievous evil posed by speech that we empirically know causes mass murder, while grossly inflating the purported "value" we get in return. Is Mr. Stone really contending that

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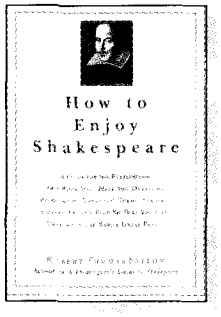

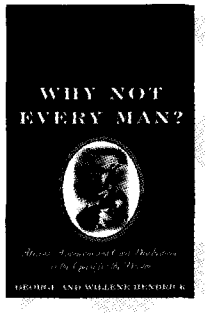

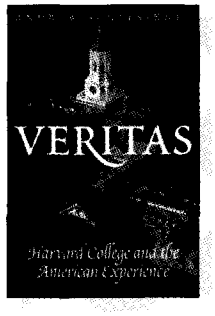

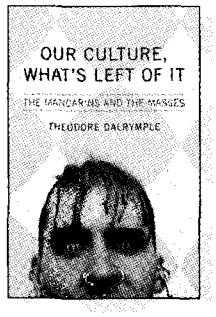

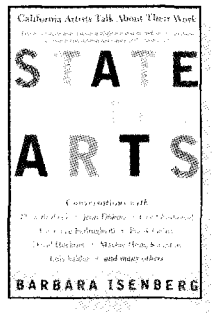

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we need to allow Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman to call for slaughter in order to understand him better? Or in order to ensure that we don't miss some grievance that CAIR or the ACLU may have neglected to bring to our attention?

First Amendment absolutism skews Mr. Stone's assessment of competing values in other critical ways as well. He argues, for example, that modern free-speech jurisprudence need not "render government impotent to protect the public safety." But the idea is not merely to avoid "impotence"; it is to be effective in protecting the public safety, which means being able to stop terrorist acts before they happen. The remedies Mr. Stone mentions are plainly inadequate to that task.

True, more money on law enforcement, aggressive prosecutions, and enhanced sentences may enable us to punish severely the terrorist who has successfully carried out his barbaric business. But, as was shown by the progressively more audacious attacks that ensued despite eight years of highly successful prosecutions between the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the 9/11 suicide hijackings, such measures do little to discourage would-be terrorists, whose ranks swell and whose patent dangerousness increases due largely to the immunity our law has given to militant advocacy.

Disappointingly, Mr. Stone appeals to the last bastion of the absolutist defense—that we should not impose a ban because determined wrong-doers will find ways around it. By that logic, we might as well repeal the criminal law in its entirety. After all, though it discourages crime, punishes it, and makes it more challenging to commit, criminal law has proved spectacularly incapable of eradicating wrongdoing.

Either militant advocacy should be permitted in principle or it should not. The discussion is not advanced a wit by the observation that criminalizing an evil will not eliminate it. Making it more difficult, and thus less likely, would be a dramatic improvement.

Finally, my essay argued that free-speech absolutists fail to appreciate the inexorable refinement over time of our society's balancing of the tension between civil liberties and national security. By closing with the slippery-slope argument that my own modest proposal would bring us right back to the shameful prosecutions under the Alien and Sedition and Espionage Acts, Mr. Stone proves my point. But his charge is specious.

The flaw in those laws, as Mr. Stone compellingly explains in his book, is that they criminalized dissent. To the contrary, I have proposed narrowly tailored laws that target militant Islam's advocacy of violent jihad. To argue, as Mr. Stone now does, that such laws would imperil people who asserted that the U.S. "'got what it deserved on 9/11,' or that 'Israel caused the war on terrorism,' or that 'Bush is destroying the Middle East for oil'" is fatuous. The criminal law does not punish culpable intent in a vacuum; it punishes culpable intent coupled with the *conduct* the law proscribes. One may not be prosecuted for advocating violence without advocating violence.

Turning now to Walter Berns, I find myself in agreement with much of his theorizing. But the disagreements he registers with me do not appear to be directed at the essay I actually wrote. Thus, Mr. Berns attributes to me the notion that if we define a type of speech (advocacy) as something other than speech (savagery), it somehow ceases to be speech, thereby allowing us to regulate it.

That is simply not my argument. While I acknowledged that speech could in some instances be thought of as a verbal "act," the entire premise of my essay is that advocacy *is* speech, but that this does not mean it may not be constrained. As Lino A. Graglia notes in his letter, I expressly contended that the First Amendment does not mean what it literally says (that is, an airtight proscription of regulation). I did, as Mr. Berns notes, invoke Learned Hand. But my point was to illustrate not only that the absolutists are wrong about the proper understanding of the free-speech guarantee but that advocacy may comfortably be banned even under the First Amendment as they have misinterpreted it.

Nor did I maintain that there is a "constitutionally significant difference between Communism and militant Islam." It was perfectly appropriate to criminalize Communist advocacy of the violent overthrow of government, and I was most critical of the tendency among doctrinaire civil libertarians to minimize the Communist threat. But if there is no constitutional difference, there is a factual difference. Militant Islam poses an even greater clear and present danger than Communism did. If, as I believe, there was a case for barring advocacy in the earlier context, there is an even better case for barring advocacy in the present one.

Lino A. Graglia's apparent absolutism is the polar opposite of Geoffrey R. Stone's, and to me it is not much more attractive. Even if I did not think it doctrinally unwise, the hour is way too late to be gainsaying the irreducible core of minority rights to which our society is and has always been committed.

But I do think it unwise. Free expression is a luminous value—and even if I am guilty of rhetorical excess, we would value it no less had it been enshrined in the Third rather than the First Amendment. Furthermore, to observe that the First Amendment obviously does not mean exactly what it says is hardly grounds for saying it means nothing of an inviolable nature or would be better understood as merely hortatory.

Where I part company with Mr. Stone is in the perilous lengths he would go to protect dissent. I thoroughly agree with him, however, in positing that there is a right to dissent. The Sedition Act prosecutions were an abomination because they eviscerated that right. Whether or not the Act itself violated the First Amendment—as I, like Mr. Stone, think it did—is a matter of objective fact. I do not see why Mr. Graglia should be any more impressed by the Federalist Supreme Court's approval of the law than he would be of, say, the Warren Court's condemnation of it. Indeed, this bleak episode stands as a caution against what Mr. Graglia seems to be arguing for: the treatment of constitutional

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Iran and Nuclear Weapons

What does the world, what does Israel have to fear?

Despite evasions, denials and equivocations, it is quite clear now that Iran is intensely pursuing the holy grail of nuclear weapons. The only question is whether it is six months or three years away from that goal. What would it mean to the world, what would it mean to Israel, if Iran succeeded in this quest and if nobody, no country, would prevent it?

What are the facts?

An existential danger. In 1981, Israel, in a daring raid, destroyed the Iraqi nuclear installation at Osirak. The whole world, sad to say, including the United States, condemned Israel for this "act of aggression." But, of course, Israel did the world a tremendous favor, a favor that was only grudgingly acknowledged many years later. Had it not been for Israel's decisive action, Saddam Hussein would indeed have had nuclear weapons. The Iraqi dictator would have been the undisputed master of the Middle East. The United States, indeed the whole world, would have been at his mercy.

An even much greater danger now threatens us from Iran, because Iran is governed by religiously fanatic mullahs, who do not shrink from bringing any sacrifice, wreaking any destruction, if they believe that it will bring their religion-inspired goals to fruition. The primary targets of that fanatical zeal of the Iranian ayatollahs are the U.S. (the "big Satan") and Israel (the "little Satan"), perceived as being America's agent in the Middle East.

> "...somebody...would have to preempt to keep Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons... The survival of the world is at stake."

Since Iran is close to possession of long-range missiles, the United States would be in mortal danger of attack by that country. But even short of such attack, Iran, just as Saddam had planned, would be in unquestioned dominance of the Middle East and of its oil supply, the life blood of the Western world. It would cause intolerable damage to life and to the economy of the United States.

But Israel is the most immediate target of Iran's fury. Iran's unquenchable hatred of Israel is totally based on religious rage and on the conviction that "nonbelievers" have no legitimate place in the Middle East. Iran's leaders have publicly threatened Israel with destruction once they come into possession of nuclear weapons.

Horrifying panorama. Israel is such a small country that one or two nuclear weapons strategically placed in its narrow coastal strip would destroy it. Louis René Beres, professor of political science and international law at Purdue University, has described what would happen if and when Iran's mullahs direct their Islamic bombs on Israel. In addition to an immediate death toll in the hundreds of thousands, overwhelming health problems would afflict the survivors. Beyond the immediate burn injuries, Israelis would be crushed by collapsing buildings and torn to shreds by flying glass. Others would fall victim to raging firestorms. Fallout injuries would include whole-body radiation injuries and injuries produced by deposits of radioactive substances within the body. After an Iranian nuclear attack, medical facilities would be taxed beyond capacity. Water supplies would become altogether unusable. Housing and shelter would be unavailable for hundreds of thousands. Transportation and all other communication would break down and food shortages would be critical and long-term.

Normal human society would cease. Many of the survivors could expect an increase in serious degenerative diseases, also premature death, impairment of vision and sterility. A vastly increased incidence of all kinds of cancers would be unavoidable. Many balanced relationships in nature would be destroyed, upset by the extensive fallout. Survivors would have to deal with mushrooming insect hordes that would spread from the radiation-damaged areas in which they arose. This fact, coupled with the prevalence of unburied corpses, uncontrolled waste and untreated sewage, would generate tens of trillions of flies and mosquitoes. Breeding in the dead bodies, these insects would make it impossible to control typhus, malaria, dengue fever and encephalitis. But beyond that, throughout Israel, the largest health threat would be posed by hundreds of thousands of rotting human corpses. The survivors might envy the dead.

The effects of a nuclear attack on Israel are too horrible to consider. Even the description given above cannot begin to do justice to the devastation and to the total destruction that would be wrought. There can be little question that, as its final action as a coherent society, Israel would use its own considerable military might against its tormentors and would convert the entire Middle East into a hell, in which ultimately nothing could survive. It is clear that that has to be prevented at all cost, and that no effort should be spared to keep the hands of the evil ayatollahs off the nuclear trigger. One hopes that it can be done by persuasion and diplomacy. But if it can not, somebody – perhaps the United States or perhaps Israel, with or without the approval of the United States – would have to preempt and, by whatever means, keep Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. It is the most important cause of our time. The survival of the world is at stake.

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guarantees as if they were advisory. Without the mandate of law, without courts to enforce them, those protections would be certain to be swept aside when majorities found it expedient to do so.

I wholeheartedly agree with Mr. Graglia that the Warren Court went overboard, and that we need not embrace a First Amendment jurisprudence that leaves us vulnerable to terrorist attack. But while, as he says, all issues in a democracy should be decided by the views of the people, the American people have decided, in their fundamental law, that a core of free speech cannot be overridden by the majority—which means it must be protected by the courts. The challenge, of course, is to identify what that finite core is and to protect it—but only it.

On this score, I believe Robert H. Bork has the best of the argument. There are well-established categories of speech (such as advocacy of violence) that do not advance the exposition of ideas and the search for truth. Within those parameters, the people's democratic representatives ought to be able to regulate expression. To be sure, there is a role for the courts, but it is limited to ensuring that any regulation is confined to those narrow categories. It should not extend to assessing the likelihood that a particular episode of speech, *within one of those categories*, will result in the harm against which the regulation was designed to protect us.

Gaza

TO THE EDITOR:

In purporting to analyze "the most severe political crisis" in Israel's brief history, Hillel Halkin focuses on the influence of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hacohen Kook and his son ["The Settlers' Crisis, and Israel's," March]. This leads him to the conclusion that "all that is left" of the settler movement "is a Kookian faith." But opponents of Prime Minister Sharon's withdrawal and eviction plan cannot be viewed solely through the narrow prism of religious messianism. Surely Mr. Halkin would not consider political leaders like Natan Sharansky, Moshe Arens, and Uzi Landau, and the 60 percent of Likud voters who opposed Sharon's plan, to be motivated by "a Kookian faith."

The most glaring omission from Mr. Halkin's analysis is his failure to address how, in the absence of a peace agreement, the Sharon government could forcibly expel its own citizens from 25 communities for the sole reason that they are Jewish. Under what moral principle must disputed land be made *judenrein* in order for it to be ruled by Palestinian Arabs? This burning question remains unanswered, and without addressing it one cannot comprehend the "violent opposition" to Sharon's plan.

Nor does Mr. Halkin address the chilling effect on free speech and democracy in Israel resulting from recent actions by the Sharon government, like the dismissal of cabinet ministers opposed to the euphemistically named "disengagement" plan (arrived at, Sharon boasted, "in consultation with myself"). Sharon has stated that "those opposed to the disengagement are involved in incitement," to which Natan Sharansky replied, "It is frightening to see how an entire public of law-abiding citizens who oppose the disengagement are being delegitimized." The heavy-handed attempt to stifle all opposition has engendered a great deal of the heat surrounding Sharon's plan.

Though I am not qualified to discuss Mr. Halkin's assertion that "Gaza itself has little strategic value," I would note that after the Six-Day war, Yigal Allon wrote to Israel's cabinet that Gaza was "essential" and should be annexed (after resettlement of the refugees). Sharon's plan includes the surrender of the strategic "Philadelphia" corridor, despite the recent conclusion of the former head of the Israel Defense Forces' southern command "that there is no alternative to Israel's continuing presence" there. Apparently, the security value of Gaza, with its 25-mile coastline, is at least debatable.

In a 1991 essay in the *Jerusalem Report* titled "Peace Through Settlements," Mr. Halkin wrote that "any peace agreement with a Palestinian state that calls for the eviction of the Jews living in that state cannot possibly lead to the kind of peace that both [the Israelis] and the Palestinians need." That conclusion remains valid today.

ROGER A. GERBER
Scarsdale, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Even though Hillel Halkin describes himself as sympathetic to the settlers, I find this hard to believe. His latest article is nothing more than a broadside against them. There is no other way to describe his claim that the settlers are irrational and messianic, comparable to the followers of Sabbatai Zevi, the false messiah of the 17th century. Following this line of argument, other pioneers of the Zionist enterprise, who also acted against all odds and followed what was considered an irrational and unattainable cause, were messianic too.

One could argue that Mr. Halkin is the "virtuous fool" (*hasid shoteh*) for blindly putting his faith in Ariel Sharon. Only a short while ago Sharon said that "[the settlement] Kadim is like Tel Aviv" in being integral to the state of Israel. But after being elected, in a stunningly undemocratic move, he essentially adopted the platform of his election rival. To explain the logic of this about-face, Mr. Halkin offers a list of hints, nods, winks, and unwritten commitments from the Sharon government and the Bush administration, promising that all will be well after disengagement. Yet in return for these promises Israel has to surrender actual territory, expel citizens from their homes, undermine the country's democratic foundations, and risk civil war.

AVNER REGGEV
Scarsdale, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin acknowledges that both "Ariel Sharon and the settlers know that, if this disengagement succeeds, it will be a dress rehearsal for what inevitably must come next: a similar withdrawal, involv-

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ing far greater numbers of settlers, from most of the West Bank." While devoting most of his article to exploring the theological fine points of the settlement movement, Mr. Halkin never explains how a country as tiny and cramped as pre-1967 Israel (or some near approximation of it) is supposed to exist surrounded by a jihadist state that will be free to build and import whatever weapons it desires, from rockets to anti-aircraft missiles to weapons of mass destruction.

An indication of such an entity's likely disposition toward Israel can be drawn from the recent municipal elections in the West Bank and Gaza, in which Hamas scored landslide victories. Hamas is also thought to stand an excellent chance of winning the Palestinian parliamentary elections this summer.

P. DAVID HORNIK
Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

In his focus on the settlers' "messianism," Hillel Halkin distorts the history of the settlement movement. He ignores the fact that the movement that arose after the 1967 Six-Day war calling for Israel to retain all the territories it had captured in that war—the Land of Israel Movement—was primarily made up of prominent figures from the Left: Yitzhak and Moshe Tabenkin, Moshe Shamir, Zvi Shiloah, Nathan Alterman, Eliezer Livneh, and many others. Though a few people associated with the Right joined, a conscious effort was made to keep out people from religious and right-wing parties.

The first crucial settlement effort, which gave birth to Kiryat Arba, was brought to fruition by the combined efforts of secular and religious nationalists. The Jordan Valley was settled mostly by people from the Labor camp, and the Golan Heights settlers were chiefly secular.

Halkin dismisses the strategic importance of Gaza in one short phrase: "Gaza itself has little strategic value." But none other than Sharon himself, writing in 1992, could say that

> Israel did not return all the territories taken from Egypt in the Six-Day war; the most important of these, the Gaza Strip, was not handed back. Moreover, the essentiality of retaining the strip in Israeli hands was so self-evident that even the Egyptians did not try—certainly not seriously—to demand its return.

The Gaza Strip thrusts out of the Sinai area toward Israel's very heart. It is situated only 13 kilometers from the city of Ashkelon, 30 kilometers from the port of Ashdod, and 55 kilometers from the population centers of Gush Dan. From Gaza, an enemy can deploy forces or station artillery and rocket launchers of the sort long owned by terrorist organizations and certainly by all armies.

The potential surrender of Judea and Samaria is an even greater threat: these territories are on high ground dominating Israel's narrow coastal plain; their sacrifice puts Israel's survival at risk. No one knows all this—or knew all this—better than Sharon, who hammered away at the folly of Oslo in statement after statement. The real question, ignored by Mr. Halkin, is what pressures, internal and external, can possibly have led Sharon to engage in policies that he himself had repeatedly labeled as suicidal.

HERBERT ZWEIBON
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin correctly identifies the conflict in Israeli politics between a messianic worldview and the imperatives of statecraft. But he does not identify the right messianists.

To the likes of Shimon Peres and many others engaged in public discourse in Israel, the world has changed so radically that Israel's security can be enhanced by the unconditional surrender to terrorists of lands adjacent to major population centers. The terrorists are then to be financed, armed, and trained by Israel, Europe, and the United States. Egypt, and eventually the Palestinians themselves, will help usher in this new world. Israelis can live forever in perfect safety, like lotus-eaters, behind Ariel Sharon's magical fence. This barrier, unlike the Great Wall of China or the Maginot line, cannot be bypassed, tunneled under, rocketed over, or broken through.

In this scheme, the Israel Defense Forces still remain necessary to fight the true enemies of the Jewish state, i.e., those patriotic Jews who do not accept the new gospel of redemption through self-mutilation. These unbelievers have the additional temerity to suggest that government should rule by the consent of the governed, and that the popular will as expressed at the polls should determine national policies.

NAHUM J. DUKER
Melrose Park, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin states that Ariel Sharon enjoys "overwhelming support" in Israel for his disengagement plan. Why, then, does he not allow a public referendum? A victory would certainly take the wind out of the sails of the opposition.

JEROME S. KAUFMAN
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR:

Rabbi Tsvi Yehuda Kook's apotheosis of the Israeli state could not have been shared by his father, who conceived of a "*medinat Yisrael*" in deeply religious terms. The elder Rabbi Kook was highly critical of the Zionist movement, and eventually advocated the establishment of a separate organization of religious Jews.

MATIS GREENBLATT
Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkins's basic contention—that Israelis of the national-religious camp oppose abandoning settlements in Gaza and the West Bank for theological reasons—is correct. But Mr. Halkin focuses on the wrong theology. The opposition to these policies is rooted not in Sabbatian messianism but in the biblical promise made by God to the Jewish people concerning the land of Israel.

Sabbatianism advocated the deliberate immersion in evil as a means to achieve holiness. Contrary to what Mr. Halkin claims, without offering any evidence, there is no trace of this pathology in the voluminous writ-

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ings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hacohen Kook, to whom national-religious Jews look as a master. Virtually all religious Jews believe that God gave the Land of Israel to the Jewish people in perpetuity. "I have given this land to your descendants," God said to Abraham. No one needs to share that belief, or even to respect it. But critics of religious Jews in general, and of national-religious Israelis in particular, need to understand it.

AARON STREITER
Brooklyn College
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin traces the evolution of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hacohen Kook's thought in the Israeli national-religious camp and forecasts "theological disaster" for that community if Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan is implemented. But Mr. Halkin underestimates the strength and resilience of Kookian theology, and in doing so overstates the danger posed to it by disengagement.

In Kook's thought, the state of Israel is a vehicle for attaining the ultimate redemption because it facilitates the ingathering of the exiles and the reawakening of Jewish national consciousness. It derives holiness from its mission as such, even though the state may be far from the messianic ideal.

Contrary to Mr. Halkin's assertion, there is no similarity between Rabbi Kook's attitude toward Israel's young socialist pioneers (*halutzim*) and the Sabbatian attitude toward sin. The Sabbatians saw the sin itself as a means for attaining holiness. Rabbi Kook viewed the *halutzim* as restoring an integral part of Judaism despite their lack of religious observance and their unawareness of what the ultimate fruits of their labor would be.

As described in the Bible, the Israelites encountered many setbacks in conquering and retaining the land of Israel. If the disengagement is in fact carried out, it will be viewed as no more of a setback than the capture of the ark of the covenant by the Philistines. Jews are accustomed to adversity, and viewing the disengagement as anything more would be missing the forest for the trees.

DAVID GULKO
New York City

HILLEL HALKIN writes:

Every reason given by Roger A. Gerber, Avner Reggev, P. David Hornik, Herbert Zweibon, and Nahum J. Duker for not "disengaging" from Gaza and other parts of the occupied territories is a good one. Since the Arab population of these territories is currently in the neighborhood of 3 million and growing at a rate roughly double that of Israeli Jews, I would therefore like to ask them which of the following proposals they support: (a) forcibly expelling these people; (b) letting them remain where they are without civil rights as the inhabitants of an apartheid state; (c) granting them full Israeli citizenship in a democratic bi-national state in which they will eventually comprise a majority; (d) trusting in God.

Since the opponents of disengagement, secular as well as religious, have refused to commit themselves to any of solutions (a) through (c) and have no others of their own to offer, one must assume that they choose (d). This is why their opposition is at bottom messianic. It is predicated on the blind hope not only that the United States and the rest of the world will forever tolerate Israeli rule over all of Gaza and the West Bank, but also that the Palestinians of these areas will disappear. In the absence of such a miracle, Israel's only rational choice is to separate from these Palestinians by withdrawing from Gaza and most of the West Bank to unilaterally determined, militarily and demographically defensible borders. Although such borders will not be ideal, they will be vastly preferable both to those that preceded the 1967 war and to those that exist now.

To reply to some specific points: Mr. Gerber asks how I can support Israel's "expulsion" of its own citizens from the Gaza Strip "for the sole reason that they are Jewish." Actually, as I wrote a while back in a column in the *Jerusalem Post*, I do not support the settlers' expulsion. I support the withdrawal of Israel's army and state presence from the Gaza Strip. Any settlers who wish to remain behind and negotiate their status with the Palestinian Authority should be allowed to do so, and I believe the Sharon government is misadvised in denying them this option.

Messrs. Gerber and Reggev protest that Ariel Sharon is acting undemocratically by reneging on his campaign promises and "stifling opposition" to disengagement. On the latter point I must say that if the opposition to disengagement has been "stifled," I for one have failed to notice. It is in fact very loud and getting louder, and I know of no one in Israel who has been threatened or intimidated for adding his voice to it.

As for Sharon's campaign promises, it is true that, although he constantly spoke before the last election of the need to make "painful" territorial compromises, he also publicly rejected a proposal by then Labor party leader Amram Mitzna to withdraw from Gaza, so that his post-election decision to do so came as an about-face. This was the reason that he asked the Likud, his own party, to hold a referendum on the matter, which he expected to win but lost instead. While this ballot was not legally binding, Sharon, in my opinion, should have done one of two things at that point: either sought to hold the nationwide referendum on disengagement that Jerome S. Kaufman asks about, or called for new elections and a new mandate. Every public-opinion poll showed that he would have won either vote handily—as he would if either were held today.

And yet there were also good practical reasons against such a course. A referendum could have been delayed for many months by legal and parliamentary challenges, and there was no Knesset majority for new elections. All in all, given the fact that the public clearly wanted disengagement, Sharon's behavior does not strike me as all that reprehensible. The big difference between it and Yitzhak Rabin's analogous breaking of his campaign promises in signing the Oslo Agreement is that Rabin was presiding over an evenly split country while Sharon has been consis-

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tently backed by two out of every three Israelis. In this respect he is more comparable to Menachem Begin, who also reneged on his 1977 electoral platform in order to sign a highly popular peace treaty with Egypt.

Messrs. Gerber, Hornik, and Zweibon accuse me of slighting the Gaza Strip's strategic importance. Gaza indeed "thrusts . . . toward Israel's very heart," as Mr. Zweibon puts it, and was especially threatening when Egyptian army units were stationed there before 1967. But it has been neutralized as a jumping-off point for an invasion of Israel under the terms of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. (The Egyptians, one might add, gladly forsook Gaza in negotiating this treaty not because they realized it was strategically essential to Israel but because they were delighted to see Israel saddled with administering it.) Although the Gaza Strip can always be used as a base for Palestinian terror, such terror, unless it gets its hands on nuclear weapons (which are unlikely to be manufactured in Gaza), can never threaten Israel's existence. The same cannot be said of too many Palestinians within Israel's borders.

To Mr. Duker I would observe that Ariel Sharon, unlike Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin at Oslo, has no illusions about Palestinian intentions or about the magical properties of anything. His thinking about Gaza and the West Bank is based on the belief that the Palestinians are not to be trusted and cannot be made peace with in the foreseeable future. Hence—again unlike Peres and Rabin—he has no inclination to negotiate with them and is determined to act unilaterally in establishing Israel's permanent borders.

I agree with Matis Greenblatt about the difference between Abraham Isaac Hacohen Kook the father and Tsvi Yehuda Kook the son, and I said as much in my article. Still, the son's sanctification of the state, while not found in the writings of the father (who died before Israel's establishment), exists there as a latent possibility. One cannot after all view secular Zionism (as Kook the father did) as a divine vehicle without opening the door to viewing a secular Zionist state in the same light.

If religious opposition to disengagement from Gaza is most strongly rooted not in messianism but in a belief in God's "biblical promise" of the land of Israel, as Aaron Streiter proposes, how does he explain the fact that the ultra-Orthodox in Israel largely support disengagement and have traditionally been dovish on territorial issues? Indeed, even the National Religious Party, the main political organ of the settler movement since 1967, was not territorially expansionist before then. What, if not post-1967 messianism, can account for this?

I did not make a systematic analogy between Kookian messianism and Sabbatianism, as Mr. Streiter and David Gulko appear to think I did. I did point out that when Abraham Isaac Hacohen Kook came to conceive of secular Zionists as instruments of redemption, even though they flouted the ritual commandments of Judaism, he was like the Sabbatians conceiving of the sinful as an expression of the sacred. This strays far from normative Jewish thought.

Finally, I would like to make clear my position on the Jewish settlement movement. I have always believed and written that Jews have the right to live anywhere in the historic land of Israel, just as I have believed and written that Jews do not have the right to turn Palestinians into disenfranchised helots. This has led me in the past to propose, in the pages of COMMENTARY as well as elsewhere, that the establishment of a Palestinian state be conditioned on its willingness to accept the continued presence of Jewish settlers under its sovereignty, so that the historic land of Israel would consist of two independent but federated states, each with Jews and Arabs living in it. Yet since neither the Palestinian Authority, nor the government of Israel, nor the settlers themselves have ever evinced the slightest interest in such a solution, and since the 2000-2004 Palestinian war of terror against Israel has made its implementation more problematic than ever, I have been reluctantly forced to concede that it is not practical.

The Man from Stratford

TO THE EDITOR:

I was disappointed with John Gross's article, "Will the Real Shakespeare Please Stand Up?" [March]. Seeing the title, I thought that Mr. Gross might have been venturing into the heterodox territory of challenging traditional Shakespeare authorship. But no such luck. Instead, we have his erudite but bland dissection of 1,394 additional pages of Elizabethan literary speculation.

Standard Shakespearian historicism is an easy game. It begins with a basic premise—William Shakspere of Stratford authored the works—and inventively backfills from there. Mr. Gross encapsulates the system nicely: "There are no diaries, letters, memoirs, or interviews"; the documentary evidence is "dry and impersonal; major aspects of his life remain a blank." But then there are "the plays and the poems" themselves and "knowledge . . . of the society in which he lived and moved."

The orthodox account of Shakespeare's life thus becomes a self-sustaining literary organism. No evidence that Shakspere of Stratford *ever* attended school? Well, he must have; he authored the plays. The provincial grammar schools of his day were wildly inconsistent in quality? *His* must have been a proletarian Eton (after all, he authored the plays). Shakespeare's own daughters were illiterate? Well, he may have invented Portia, Lady Macbeth, and many other women of substance, but he was a man of his time. How did he learn Romance languages, court etiquette, law, military science, botany, dynastic and classical history, contemporary continental minutiae, etc.? Perhaps he had access to a library or tutored a noble child. And so on.

Were the author of Shakespeare's works to be identified as an actual historical personage, like Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), this orthodoxy would collapse. Lit-

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erary speculation would have to be replaced by the drudgery of biographical research and dissection. The intentions of the author might be reasonably discerned, rather than, as now, conveniently occulted.

The latest attack by Stratfordian scholars on Edward de Vere's probable authorship of the canon takes the tack that he was too bad, or too busy, to have written Shakespeare's works. Put another way, a real man in history simply could not have done it. Now, that's biography!

JONATHAN F. KEILER
Bowie, Maryland

JOHN GROSS writes:

I must admit that Jonathan F. Keiler is in good company. Some illustrious figures—Mark Twain and Sigmund Freud, for instance—are among those who have persuaded themselves that the works of Shakespeare must have been written by somebody else.

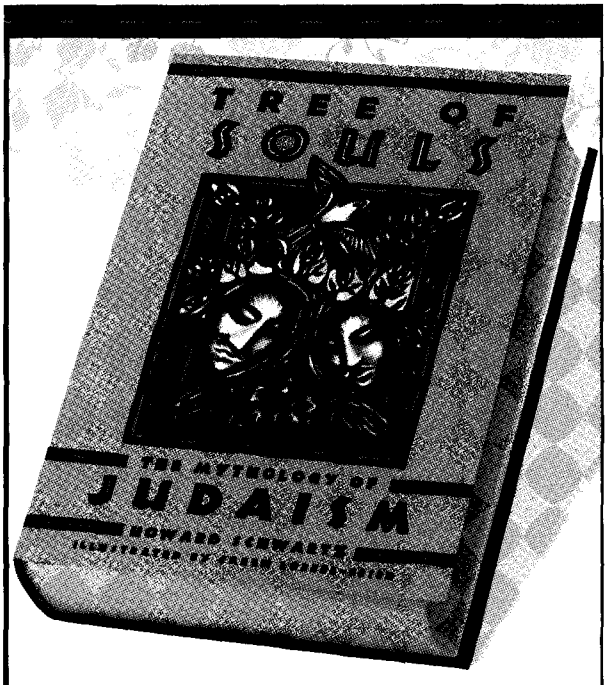
But I am afraid that Mr. Keiler is also, rather more obviously, in not such good company. The so-called "authorship controversy" is a beacon for cranks. It has generated an enormous amount of haywire theorizing and ingenious pseudo-scholarship.

Over the years, there have been many contenders for the role of "real" author. Francis Bacon, who once stood in proud isolation, has been all but elbowed aside by subsequent claimants, including Christopher Marlowe, the Earl of Oxford (Freud's candidate as well as Mr. Keiler's), sundry other Elizabethan noblemen, and Queen Elizabeth I herself. I can only suggest that Mr. Keiler read up and ponder the history of the entire controversy. The relevant chapters in Samuel Schoenbaum's *The Lives of Shakespeare* would make a good (and entertaining) place to start.

One curious feature of the campaign to dethrone "the man from Stratford" is the extent to which it has been an American enterprise. Not entirely, of course. The first seeds of the Baconian theory were planted in 18th-century England. There have also been German anti-Stratfordians, who have tended to champion the claims of the Earl of Rutland, and French ones, who have shown a corresponding weakness for the Earl of Derby.

But from Delia Bacon in the mid-19th century onward (no prizes for guessing whose claims *she* favored), Americans have undoubtedly predominated. Even Henry James was an anti-Stratfordian, without quite being pro anyone else, while the first bold soul to argue that "Shakespeare" was actually the pen name of King James I was none other than Malcolm X.

This is all rather odd. One would have thought that the idea that the plays were written by the Man from Stratford—the Man from Main Street, so to speak—would have been much more congenial to the American democratic spirit than the notion that they were the work of some crowned head or blueblood. But there it is; and if Mr. Keiler's views don't win universal acceptance, he can at least console himself with the thought that he is part of a venerable American tradition.



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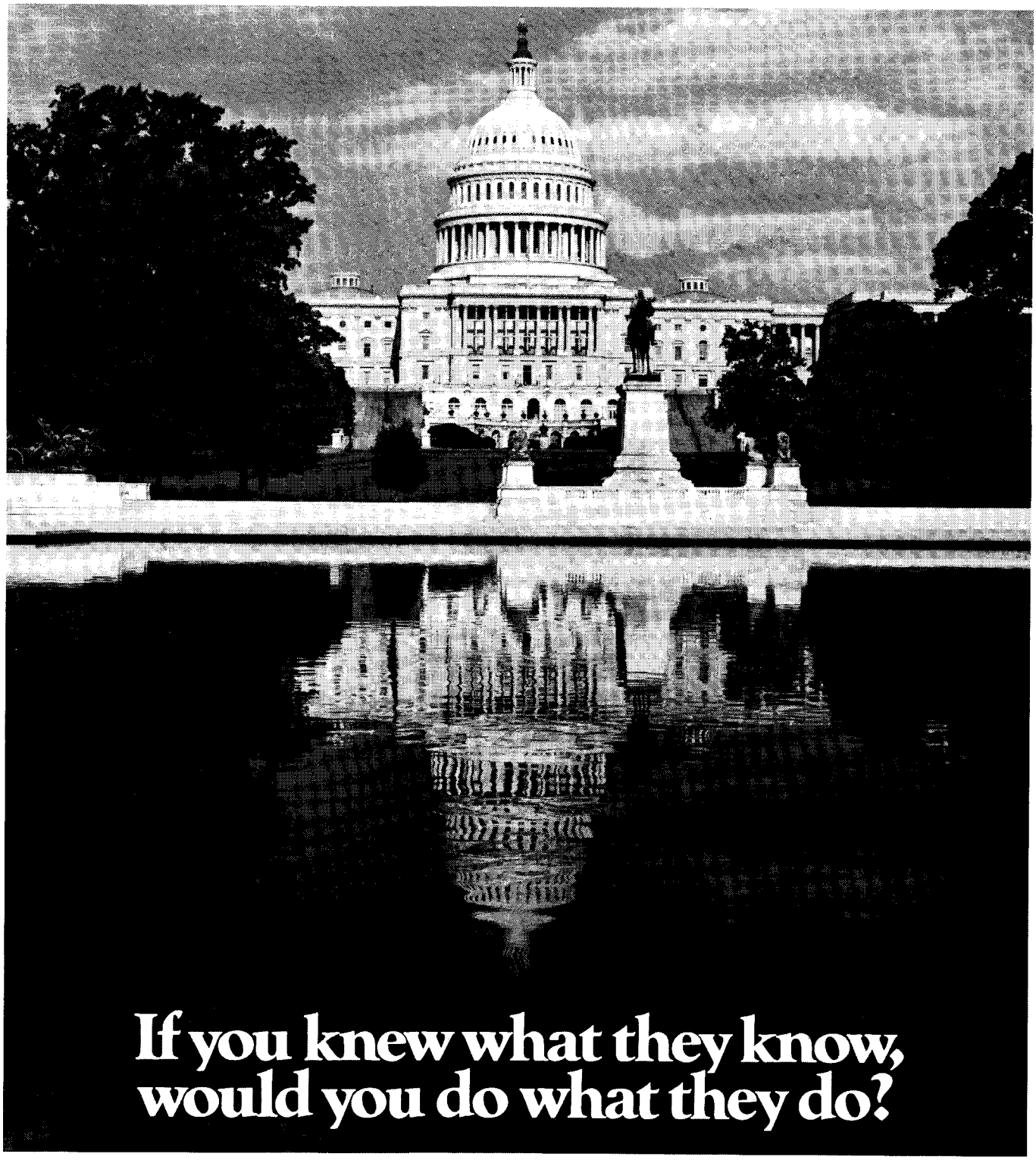

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Commentary
June 2005

Annihilating Terry Schiavo

Paul McHugh

DURING THE tumultuous final weeks in the life of Terri Schiavo, the young woman who died in a Florida hospice in April, press reports in the nation's media typically focused on the bitter conflicts among members of her family over her treatment, disagreements among consultants over her state of consciousness, and the increasingly intense arguments in legislatures and the courts over her guardianship. Since her death, the case and the story of her death and dying have been mined for their bearing on our ongoing culture wars and for the debate over the place of "values" in our politics. In particular, the seeming failure of the Republican leadership to rally legislative support in favor of keeping her alive has been seized upon as evidence of the Right's overreaching, and as a lesson in the ironies of ideology. In the words of a writer in the *New York Times Magazine*, "the heirs to Goldwater and Reagan seemed to forget how they came to control the values debate in America in the first place: not by interfering in the moral choices of families but by promising to *stop* government from doing exactly that."

Many a hidden assumption lurks in that statement, not least concerning the (assumed) wishes of the dying woman herself. It is worth reminding ourselves, moreover, that she succumbed in the end by being deprived of food and water by order of the courts—which is to say, by order of government. But in what follows I want to concentrate on another, neglected aspect of this entire dismal episode.

Conspicuously missing from the chorus of voices arguing over the meaning and implications of the Schiavo case have been the views of a class of people with a uniquely relevant body of experience and insight: namely, the doctors and nurses who customarily provide care to patients like Terri Schiavo. As a result, few people appear to have grasped that the way she died was most unusual. That, instead, it has been widely understood to be not only a proper but also a perfectly commonsensical way to die, a way approved of by most doctors and nurses, can only be explained by a deep change that has taken place over the last decades in our thinking about how to care for the helpless and the disabled among us.

LET US begin with the published facts. In 1990, when Terri Schiavo was in her mid-twenties, she suffered a cardiac arrest that produced a severe cerebral anoxic injury—anoxia being an abnormally low amount of oxygen in the body's tissues—and coma. From this coma she emerged gradually, settling for the next fifteen years into an impaired state of consciousness. She could swallow, breathe, sleep, and awaken without assistance, and could react to

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sudden sounds with a glance, or to pain by grimacing or groaning. But she was apathetic to inner needs and external events. She was mute, mostly immobile, incontinent, psychologically blank.

For the last several years, Terri Schiavo was being treated in a hospice for terminally ill people. There she received basic nursing care for her bodily needs—she was bathed and turned on schedule—while nutritious fluids were supplied through a tube that had been inserted through her abdomen into her stomach during her earlier treatment for injury. Because of her immobility and apathy, she gradually developed muscle contractions that twisted her limbs and body into a fixed contorted posture. She suffered frequent bedsores, and, with poor oral hygiene, her teeth rotted. In this state she was sustained by the regular attention of a devoted staff and family, being financially supported by money her husband Michael had gained for her through a malpractice suit.

And so she would have remained—alive and physically stable, giving off a few signals that were possibly reflexive but were believed by some members of the hospice staff and her family to represent modest signs of awareness of her surroundings—until, within a period of years, an infection, a blood clot, or a cardio-respiratory difficulty would bring her life to an end. What changed in this situation was not her physical condition but her husband's mind.

He, her legal guardian, had at first battled for her care and support, but had gradually lost hope of her further recovery. He first signaled his new attitude when he balked at permitting antibiotic treatment for a recurring bladder infection. Although dissuaded on that occasion by the nursing staff, he eventually began to demand that they stop all sustaining treatments, including the gastric tube that provided nutritious fluids or any feeding of his wife by spoon or cup.

The other parties, however, were not won over to Michael Schiavo's view that Terri was beyond hope of recovery. Instead, her parents launched what became a long legal fight with him for her guardianship. Their own intention was to continue her care in the hospice. At the very least, they wanted to feed her by mouth as one would any helpless person.

Through a series of court battles, legislative enactments, and executive mandates, the husband's right of guardianship was upheld, the gastric tube was removed, and all—hospice staff, parents, siblings, onlookers—were forbidden by court order to give her food or drink orally. Even a chip of ice to relieve the pain of a parched mouth and throat was judicially prohibited, and local sheriffs were alerted to prevent it. Within thirteen distress-filled days, she died of dehydration.

WHAT OTHER factors are relevant here—laboratory data, clinical diagnostic opinions, expressed views to the extent we have been informed of them?

Terri Schiavo's initial cardiac arrest, so rare in a young person, had been provoked by a morbidly low level of potassium in her blood—an unusual metabolic event unless the person has been losing potassium through persistent vomiting, diarrhea, or diuresis (increased discharge of urine). The plausible diagnostic explanation was that she was suffering from bulimia nervosa, and had been voluntarily and regularly vomiting to control her body weight.

The injury to her brain was demonstrably extensive. The electroencephalogram (EEG) was grossly abnormal, and typical of a patient with severely impaired consciousness. In 2002, a computer-activated tomogram (CAT scan) of her brain showed extensive cavities of dead tissue in both cerebral hemispheres, and spotty islands of loss in the band of cerebral cortex remaining around the cavities. But no functional assessment of her surviving cerebral tissue was performed by means of magnetic-resonance imaging (MRI) or proton-emission tomography (PET). The absence of such assessments is surprising. Especially if done serially, they would have demonstrated whether any neural activity persisted in the band of cortex around the cavities and whether any of this tissue was recovering over time.

Terri Schiavo was examined by qualified neurologists. Most of them concluded that she fit into the rather amorphous group of severely brain-injured patients defined as being in a "persistent vegetative state" (PVS). This diagnostic category encompasses individuals with cerebral diseases of various kinds who, though only dimly wakeful, retain the life-sustaining functions of respiration, blood circulation, and metabolic integrity.

It is perhaps because such patients display so lowered a state of vigilance that, in striving to define their condition, neurologists lighted upon a metaphor contrasting vegetation with animation. I remember teasing the admirable clinician who first coined this term that I had seen many patients but few carrots sleeping, waking, grunting, or flinching from pain. Although the term "vegetative" does distinguish what is lost from what remains in such a patient's capacities, it can also have the unfortunate effect of suggesting that there is

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something less worthy about those in this condition.

As for the adjective "persistent," it is perfectly precise, and makes no prognostic claim (as would, say, the term "permanent"). It simply describes the patient's history. What we know from experience is that, as with most neurological impairments, patients "persisting" in this state of blunted consciousness for more than eighteen months are generally unlikely to recover.

The neurologists who coined the diagnostic category PVS did so out of the best of clinical motives. In particular, they wanted to distinguish it from the "brain-dead" state, where no functional capacities—to breathe, to swallow, or to respond—remain. With "brain death," a patient evinces no response to any stimulus. Brain monitors show no activity. Heart and viscera can carry on their automatic activity only with the aid of mechanical, ventilator-driven respiration, and will cease when it is discontinued.

By definition, then, PVS is not death hidden by machinery. It is human life under altered neurological circumstances. And this distinction makes all the difference in how doctors and nurses think about it and treat its sufferers.

The phrase "life under altered circumstances" encompasses every human sickness and disability. It also speaks to what is entailed in the professional art of medicine—the art, that is, of identifying, differentiating, curing, rehabilitating, defending, and, in the words of the Hippocratic oath, "benefiting" the sick. Given that doctors and nurses naturally align themselves with life, and are trained to care for whatever life brings, including "life under altered neurological circumstances," it is only to be expected that they would reject and shrink from actions that aim to kill. Exactly how they come to that civilizing point of view in their training to become doctors and nurses is a story unto itself.

The education of doctors and nurses is an interweaving of related but essentially distinct pathways of experience. One pathway comprises accumulated scientific and technical knowledge of the laws of nature. The other pathway is made up of extended, one-on-one experience with patients. This begins early as, with guidance from the masters of their craft, students and interns encounter clinical cases in the form of intensely personal dramas, events shared with many concerned parties: patients, relatives, fellow professionals. In these encounters, all the powers of science and technology that identify the characteristics of "life under altered circumstances" are enriched and elucidated.

As it happens, I have had many years of experience as both student and teacher in caring for patients like Terri Schiavo with neuro-psychiatric disorders. My patients have included individuals with dementia, confusion, apathy, and stupor, produced by diseases like Alzheimer's, Huntington's, stroke, infection, trauma, malnutrition, poisoning, and asphyxia. As is true of most doctors, the clinical cases I remember most vividly—right down to the location within a hospital of the bed where the patient lay—were those I saw early in my training.

Such cases help form the assumptions and attitudes that we doctors and nurses bring toward the responsibilities that we have elected to take on. We can always be persuaded to talk about these war stories, as we call them, because they were so important to us in learning our craft and in how we act thereafter toward the people in our care. Here is one such story.

In the late 1950's, I was the resident neurologist on a team responsible for the care of some 25 chronically ill, permanently disabled, and bedbound patients suffering from advanced neuro-psychiatric disorders. Each morning I would travel from bed to bed in the company of several junior interns, pushing a cart with the patients' records and checking up on them while simultaneously discoursing on what I knew about their condition. Because patients in such a chronic setting change little from day to day, finding something new to say about them becomes a challenge.

This was especially true of one patient—a man in his late fifties who, after a botched brain operation, had been left in an apathetic state not too different from Terri Schiavo's. Like her, he gave little evidence of awareness, responding mostly with groans and grimaces and moving little if at all. He had been in that state for several years when I took over on the ward; ultimately, he would live thirteen years in this condition.

The nurses, who were feeding him with spoon and cup, thought he had some awareness—as did some relatives who visited him—and even claimed to have heard him utter a few words. But evidently their testimony was not taken seriously. A biographical sketch written about him after his death—for in his active career he had been very well known—would state that, once having suffered his brain injury, "he never spoke again."

We young physicians felt honored to be caring for this man, who was of our fraternity. Prior to his injury, indeed, he had been quite simply the foremost clinical scientist in America. Among his many achievements, he had illuminated the functions of

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the parathyroid glands and so enlarged scientific knowledge of calcium metabolism, the dynamics of bone construction, and diseases of the bone like osteoporosis and osteomalacia. From his specific studies, he had discerned general principles (including "end-organ resistance to hormonal action," a concept prefiguring the receptor revolution in endocrinology), and he made leaders of his students by teaching them how to employ biological science in investigating the pathogenesis of human diseases. In a relatively brief academic career, he had changed the face of American academic medicine and pointed the way to the future.

So we were pleased to care for him. But this did not ease the task before me upon visiting his bedside each morning as I searched for something interesting to say to my jaded interns. Soon enough they began to grumble that I was repeating myself as I would note dutifully that, although Dr. A's apathetic state was profound and unchanging, occasionally such a patient might, if startled, give out a coherent response revealing some human consciousness. Looking at the man lying before them, they thought they had ample reason to doubt the applicability of my ideas to this case. A particularly bold intern challenged me one morning: "Enough of that, show us that he can respond."

I knew perfectly well that I was being baited over a matter where I was unsure of my ground, but I moved briskly from the records cart to the bed, shook the patient by the shoulder, and asked in a sharp voice: "Dr. A, what's the serum calcium in pseudopseudohypoparathyroidism?" For the first time in my experience with him, he glanced up at me and, loudly enough for all the interns to hear, said: "It's just about normal."

A full and complete sentence had emerged from a man whom none of us had ever heard speak before. His answer was correct—as he should know, having discovered and named the condition I asked him about. Subsequently, in all the months we cared for him, he would never utter another word. But what a difference that moment had made to all of us. We matured that day not only in matters of the mind but in matters of the heart. Somehow, deep inside that body and damaged brain, he was there—and our job was to help him. If we had ever had misgivings before, we would never again doubt the value of caring for people like him. And we didn't give a fig that his EEG was grossly abnormal.

TO APPLY these observations to Terri Schiavo's case, we might imagine her as the subject of a medical analysis known as a morbidity-and-mortality (M&M) conference. Such conferences, reviewing how a patient has been treated, are a standard method by which medical and surgical services maintain standards of excellence.

In the Schiavo case, such an M&M assessment, considering all the factors at play in her treatment, would probably conclude that in the early years after her injury she had received first-rate care. She was carried through the acute phase, when she could easily have died. Having settled into a state of partial recovery, she was then taken to rehabilitative and physiotherapeutic centers for further assessment and treatment. There she was seen by several expert clinicians, started on intragastric feedings, and protected from infections of her pulmonary and urinary tract—all with the purpose of observing her neurological and psychological condition and hoping for further recovery.

When her trajectory of recovery leveled off, she was brought back to her neighborhood for care. Here, one phase gave way to another as what might be thought of as the rescue mission changed gradually into a sustaining mission, based on the realization that she was living with a brain injury unlikely to improve further and that what remained of her life would be spent in bed, in a limitedly responsive state. Bringing her into a hospice for the performance of this sustaining mission was another excellent clinical decision.

Hospice teams are made up of doctors, nurses, social workers, and physiotherapists who together develop a plan to care for someone in an incurable and usually terminal phase of life. In contrast to hospital services, hospice teams do not see time as being "of the essence." Of the essence now is, instead, the development of mutual understanding among all the parties—patient, family, and caregivers—concerning aims and actions suitable to helping the one who suffers. Achieving those goods usually *takes* time, for everything depends on gaining and retaining the family's confidence that the team really cares about the patient—is committed to doing its best to sustain what can be sustained, to alleviate suffering while at the same time not demanding heroic sacrifices from anyone.

This last point is very important. In a hospice, the staff does not provide a ventilator or cardiac monitoring at a patient's bedside—because there is no plan to transfer the patient to an acute treatment center for respiratory or cardiac support. But neither does the staff believe that, for patients with longstanding and incurable conditions, one can or should ignore the possibility of helping them live a less painful life, even if that might mean a less long

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one. Thus, a hospice will treat the symptoms of certain potentially deadly conditions like bowel obstructions, cardiac arrhythmias, blood clots, and some infections, but will not treat the conditions themselves.

In hospice care, no one is deprived of the simple amenities of being kept clean and receiving food and water. In Terri Schiavo's case, just as the team did not withdraw her bladder catheter, which helped keep her clean, so it did not withdraw the gastric tube, which had similarly been put in place during the rescue phase in order to ease the burden of nursing her. If for some reason the gastric tube had to be removed, the team would surely have tried to sustain nutrition by feeding her with spoon and cup.

In a hospice, decisions to limit medical services are made easier by everyone's knowledge of how the patient's condition emerged. Team attention, emphasizing as it does all relevant perspectives, strives to support all relevant interests. Terri Schiavo received good care and treatment, and would not have been permitted to suffer unnecessarily. At the same time, she would not have been carried repeatedly through processes of treatment that ultimately did nothing to advance the quality of her life. Reasoning in a similar way and in full consciousness, Pope John Paul II elected not to return to a hospital for the third time in a month for treatment of his fatal condition. Instead, and despite the increased risks, he accepted the treatments available in his home.

The overarching principle that hospice doctors and nurses strive to represent and exemplify is never to betray a patient to death, or act directly to kill. They may help a patient *surrender* to death, by forgoing active medical procedures when these provide nothing but empty time and extend the period of suffering. And their particular judgments in this regard may well be challenged as ambiguous—or even arbitrary—by those with a legal mind or an axe to grind. But those judgments are usually clear to everyone working in a hospice, just as the distinction between betrayal and surrender is clear in other situations in life.

IT WAS in this phase of caring for Terri Schiavo that things went badly wrong. As we have seen, her husband had begun to despair for her and for his own future. As far as the public record shows, he seems to have been given little reason to rekindle his hopes. In particular, no functional studies (like an MRI) were done to determine whether her cerebral cortex, the brain region most responsible for coherent behavior, showed any evidence of recovering. Nor did the testimony of bedside observers help. While some thought they saw evidence of slow but tiny steps toward consciousness, others thought that she displayed only reflex reactions.

He was told her diagnosis was "persistent vegetative state." Predictably, this label complicated rather than aided the situation, encouraging those who thought that she no longer existed as an animate being and infuriating those who believed it labeled her a vegetable. That is precisely why most neuro-psychiatrists who work in hospices, even though they acknowledge the term's diagnostic accuracy, are reluctant to use it. Instead, they describe patients like Terri Schiavo in the language of neuropathology. Thus, they might have spoken of her as being in a "decorticate" condition, a term that not only indicates the problem but helps everyone—doctors, nurses, family members—think more dispassionately about how to evaluate it.

As these events unfolded, the plan of sustaining her in a hospice fell apart. Her guardian husband could no longer be persuaded to allow her to be fed, and under Florida law he had the right to demand that her nutrition be stopped. The courts were called in, and in the end judges and policemen removed the hospice team from her care, starving her until she died. No one was satisfied with the outcome. It came too slowly to suit her husband, and it came too brutally to comfort her parents. As for the hospice staff, so deeply biased in favor of sustaining life, one can only imagine their anguish.

So what, our imagined M&M conference leaders might ask, can one learn from this story? When I first considered this question along with several other doctors and nurses experienced in hospice care, we were nonplussed. Although we had treated hundreds of patients like Terri Schiavo, none of us had experienced a failure like this one. Our first thought was that other matters must have been at work—old resentments, unacknowledged jealousies, envy, bitter conflicts over money—to generate the kind of abuse of a patient so visible here. Only gradually, with publication of the reports, decisions, and interviews, did the explanation become clear.

As soon as Terri Schiavo's case moved into the law courts of Florida, the concept of "life under altered circumstances" went by the boards—and so, necessarily, did any consideration of how to serve such life. Both had been trumped by the concept of "life unworthy of life," and how to end it.

I use the term "life unworthy of life" advisedly. The phrase first appeared a long time ago—as the title of a book published in Germany in 1920, co-authored by a lawyer and a psychiatrist. *Die Freigabe*

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der Vernichtung lebensunwertes Leben translates as "Lifting Constraint from the Annihilation of Life Unworthy of Life." Terri Schiavo's husband and his clinical and legal advisers, believing that hers was now a life unworthy of life, sought, and achieved, its annihilation. Claiming to respect her undocumented wish not to live dependently, they were willing to have her suffer pain and, by specific force of law, to block her caregivers from offering her oral feedings of the kind provided to all terminal patients in a hospice—even to the point of prohibiting mouth-soothing ice chips. Everything else flowed from there.

HOW COULD such a thing happen? This, after all, is not Nazi Germany, where the culture of death foreshadowed in the awful title of that book would reach such horrendous public proportions. But we in this country have our own, homegrown culture of death, whose face is legal and moral and benignly individualistic rather than authoritarian and pseudo-scientific. It has many roots, which would require a long historical treatise to unravel, with obligatory chapters considering such factors as the growth of life-sustaining and life-extending technologies and the dilemmas they bring, the increasingly assertive deprecation of medical expertise and understanding in favor of patients' "autonomous" decision-making, the explosion in rights-related personal law and the associated explosion in medical-malpractice suits, and much else besides.

All this has resulted in a steady diminution in the bonds of implicit trust between patients and their doctors and its replacement, in some cases by suspicion or outright hostility, in many other cases by an almost reflexive unwillingness on the part of doctors to impose their own considered, prudential judgments—including their ethical judgments—on the course of treatment. In the meantime, a new discipline has stepped into the breach; its avowed purpose is to help doctors and patients alike reach decisions in difficult situations, and it is now a mandatory subject of study in medical and nursing schools.

I am speaking of course about bioethics, which came into being roughly contemporaneously with the other developments I have been describing. To the early leaders of this discipline, it was plain that doctors and nurses, hitherto guided by professional codes of conduct and ancient ideals of virtue embedded in the Hippocratic oath or in the career and writings of Florence Nightingale, were in need of better and more up-to-date instruction. But, being theorists rather than medical practitioners, most bioethicists proved to be uninterested in developing the characters of doctors and nurses. Rather, they were preoccupied with identifying perceived conflicts between the "aims" of doctors and the "rights" of patients, and with prescribing remedies for those conflicts.

Unlike in medicine itself, these remedies are untested and untestable. They have multiplied nevertheless, to the point where they have become fixtures in the lives of all of us, an unquestioned part of our vocabulary, subtly influencing our most basic attitudes toward sickness and health and, above all, our assumptions about how to prepare ourselves for death. The monuments to the bioethicists' principles include Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders, the euphemistically named Living Wills, and the legalization of physician-assisted suicide in the state of Oregon. These are not all the same thing, to be sure, and sophisticated arguments can be advanced for each of them; cumulatively, however, they are signposts of our own culture of death.

Hospital administrators are generally pleased with bioethicists and the rationalizations they provide for ceasing care of the helpless and the disabled. By the same token, their presence is generally shunned by doctors and nurses, whose medical and moral vocabulary draws from different sources, and whose training and experience have disposed them in a different direction. To most doctors and nurses, in any case, the idea that one can control the manner and pace of one's dying is largely a fantasy. They have seen what they have seen, and what they know is that at the crucial moments in this process, no document on earth can substitute for the one-on-one judgment, fallible as it may ultimately be, of a sensible, humane, and experienced physician.

Contemporary bioethics has become a natural ally of the culture of death, but the culture of death itself is a perennial human temptation; for onlookers in particular, it offers a reassuring answer ("this is how X would have wanted it") to otherwise excruciating dilemmas, and it can be rationalized every which way till Sunday. In Terri Schiavo's case, it is what won out over the hospice's culture of life, overwhelming by legal means, and by the force of advanced social opinion, the moral and medical command to choose life, to comfort the afflicted, and to teach others how to do the same. The more this culture continues to influence our thinking, the deeper are likely to become the divisions within our society and within our families, the more hardened our hatreds, and the more manifold our fears. More of us will die prematurely; some of us will even be persuaded that we want to.

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The Anti-Semitic Disease

Paul Johnson

THE INTENSIFICATION of anti-Semitism in the Arab world over the last years and its reappearance in parts of Europe have occasioned a number of thoughtful reflections on the nature and consequences of this phenomenon, but also some misleading analyses based on doubtful premises. It is widely assumed, for example, that anti-Semitism is a form of racism or ethnic xenophobia. This is a legacy of the post-World War II period, when revelations about the horrifying scope of Hitler's "final solution" caused widespread revulsion against all manifestations of group hatred. Since then, racism, in whatever guise it appears, has been identified as *the* evil to be fought.

But if anti-Semitism is a variety of racism, it is a most peculiar variety, with many unique characteristics. In my view as a historian, it is so peculiar that it deserves to be placed in a quite different category. I would call it an intellectual disease, a disease of the mind, extremely infectious and massively destructive. It is a disease to which both human individuals and entire human societies are prone.

Geneticists and experts in related fields may object that my observation is not scientifically valid. My rejoinder is simple: how can one make scientific judgments in this area? Scientists cannot even agree on how to define race itself, or whether the category exists in any meaningful sense. The immense advances in genetics over the last half-century, far from simplifying the problem, have made it appear more complex and mysterious.* All that scientists appear able to do is to present the evidence, often conflicting, of studies they have undertaken. And this, essentially, is what a historian does as well. He shows how human beings have behaved, over long periods and in many different places, when confronted with the apparent fact of marked racial differences.

The historical evidence suggests that racism, in varying degrees, is ubiquitous in human societies, so much so that it might even be termed natural and inevitable (though not irremediable: its behavioral consequences can be mitigated by education, political arrangements, and intermarriage). It often takes the form of national hostility, especially when two countries are placed by geography in postures of antagonism. Such has been the case with France and England, Poland and Russia, and Germany and Denmark, to give only three obvious examples.

The degree of this hostility can increase or diminish as a result of historical change. Thus, the

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* This is vividly brought home in one recent study, *Race: The Reality of Human Differences*, by Vincent Sarich and Frank Miele (Westview, 320 pp., $27.50). The book was dismissively reviewed in the (London) *Times Literary Supplement* (February 25, 2005) by Jerry Coyne, a professor in the department of ecology and evolution at the University of Chicago.

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Scots and the French were natural allies and on very friendly terms when they had a common enemy in the English; but after the union of Scotland with England, the Scots absorbed the broad anti-Gallicism of the British nation. Similarly, the creation of the European Union has diminished cross-border nationalist hatred in some cases (especially between France and Germany) while increasing it in a few others (Germany and Denmark).

By contrast, anti-Semitism is very ancient, has never been associated with frontiers, and, although it has had its ups and downs, seems impervious to change. The Jews (or Hebrews) were "strangers and sojourners," as the book of Genesis puts it, from very early times, and certainly by the end of the 2nd millennium B.C.E. Long before the great diaspora that followed the conflicts of Judea with Rome, they had settled in many parts of the Mediterranean area and Middle East while maintaining their separate religion and social identity; the first recorded instances of anti-Semitism date from the 3rd century B.C.E., in Alexandria. Subsequent historical shifts have not ended anti-Semitism but merely superimposed additional archaeological layers, as it were. To the anti-Semitism of antiquity was added the Christian layer and then, from the time of the Enlightenment on, the secularist layer, which culminated in Soviet anti-Semitism and the Nazi atrocities of the first half of the 20th century. Now we have the Arab-Muslim layer, dating roughly from the 1920's but becoming more intense with each decade since.

WHAT STRIKES the historian surveying anti-Semitism worldwide over more than two millennia is its fundamental irrationality. It seems to make no sense, any more than malaria or meningitis makes sense. In the whole of history, it is hard to point to a single occasion when a wave of anti-Semitism was provoked by a real Jewish threat (as opposed to an imaginary one). In Japan, anti-Semitism was and remains common even though there has never been a Jewish community there of any size.

Asked to explain why they hate Jews, anti-Semites contradict themselves. Jews are always showing off; they are hermetic and secretive. They will not assimilate; they assimilate only too well. They are too religious; they are too materialistic, and a threat to religion. They are uncultured; they have too much culture. They avoid manual work; they work too hard. They are miserly; they are ostentatious spenders. They are inveterate capitalists; they are born Communists. And so on. In all its myriad manifestations, the language of anti-Semitism through the ages is a dictionary of non-sequiturs and antonyms, a thesaurus of illogic and inconsistency.

Like many physical diseases, anti-Semitism is highly infectious, and can become endemic in certain localities and societies. Though a disease of the mind, it is by no means confined to weak, feeble, or commonplace intellects; as history sadly records, its carriers have included men and women of otherwise powerful and subtle thoughts. Like all mental diseases, it is damaging to reason, and sometimes fatal.

Irrational thinking is common enough in each of us; when anti-Semitism is added in, irrational thinking becomes not only instinctual but systemic. An experienced anti-Semite constantly looks for "evidence" to confirm his *idée fixe*, and invariably finds it—just as a Marxist, looking for "proof," constantly uncovers events that confirm his diagnosis of how the world works. (Not surprisingly, anti-Semitic theory as evolved by the young Hegelians played a major role in the evolution of Marx's methods of analysis.)

Anti-Semitism is self-inflicted, which means that, by an act of will and reason, the infection can be repelled. But this is not easy to do, especially in societies where anti-Semitism has become common or the norm. What is in any case clear is that anti-Semitism, besides being self-inflicted, is also self-destructive, and of societies and governments as much as of individuals.

An important instance of this historical law is the expulsion of the Jews (along with the Moors) from Spain in the 1490's, and the subsequent witchhunt of New Christians, or converted Jews, by the Inquisition—a process that took place at precisely the moment when Spain's penetration of the New World had opened up unprecedented opportunities for economic expansion. The effect of official anti-Semitism was to deprive Spain (and its colonies) of a class already notable for the astute handling of finance. As a consequence, the project of enlarging the New World's silver mines and importing huge amounts of silver into Spain, far from leading to rational investment in a proto-industrial revolution or to the creation of modern financial services, had a profoundly deleterious impact, plunging the hitherto vigorous Spanish economy into inflation and long-term decline, and the government into repeated bankruptcy.

The beneficiaries of Spanish anti-Semitism, in the near term, were the northern (Protestant) areas

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of the Netherlands, where an influx of Jewish refugees settling in Amsterdam and Rotterdam led to the accelerated development of the mercantile and financial sectors and the establishment for a time of Dutch global economic supremacy. In the longer term, the beneficiaries were England and the United States of America. England ceased to practice institutional anti-Semitism in the mid-17th century, when Jews, who had been expelled from the country in 1290, were permitted to resettle there (and practice their religion) without the need for special privileges. This pattern was repeated in the English colonies in America, so that the new republic became, *ab initio*, an area where anti-Semitism never had any force in law.

By the end of the 18th century, the world's first industrial revolution was an accomplished fact in Britain, and by the end of the 19th century the United States had emerged as the world's leading industrial and financial power, which it remains to this day. Theorists of comparative economic efficiency, like Max Weber and R.H. Tawney, used to point to the role of Protestantism (especially Calvinist "salvation panic") in the development of "Anglo-Saxon" industrial supremacy. The trend now is to stress the role of immigration, with Jews playing a significant role.

In the evolution of modern Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries, anti-Semitism once again proved self-destructive. The occupation of Alsace-Lorraine by Germany after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 led to a significant exodus of local Jews to Paris and the rapid growth of anti-Semitism in a country already long harboring the disease. One consequence was the Dreyfus affair—the Dreyfuses were an Alsatian family—which convulsed France for the better part of two decades.

The ensuing cultural civil war weakened France in a number of ways, not least militarily, and in the early years of the 20th century helped to persuade the Germans that France would prove an easy target, as indeed it was in 1914. A longer-term effect of the Dreyfus affair was felt in the French collapse and capitulation to the Nazis in 1940, as well as in the character of the subsequent Vichy regime.

Another outstanding case was Czarist Russia. Under Catherine II, the early elements in what was to become a complex system of anti-Semitic laws were introduced in the late 18th century after the partition of Poland, which gave Russia a large Jewish minority for the first time. Thereafter, prohibitions and restrictions were constantly enlarged and made more stringent, and were reinforced by official encouragement of "popular" pogroms. The result was a large-scale migration of Jews to the West, particularly to Britain and the United States—again to the economic and cultural benefit of the Anglo-Saxon powers. Russia was correspondingly weakened, not only by the loss of talent but also by the immense increase in administrative corruption produced by the system of restrictions.

The country was damaged in another way, too. The legal enforcement of Russian anti-Semitism became a model for the subsequent Soviet system of internal control, which can be understood as an extension to the population as a whole of laws that once oppressed Jews only. The aftereffects, including rampant corruption, are still to be felt at all levels of Russian society today.

But the most notable "victim" of anti-Semitism was Germany under Hitler. Among historians, it is still considered morally essential to demonize Hitler and to condemn unreservedly everything he and the Nazis did. But there are compelling reasons, quite apart from the interests of objective scholarship, why this should end. Hitler was not a demon but a human being, just as were Attila and Barbarossa, Luther and Wallenstein, Frederick the Great and Bismarck.

Though from a humble background and poorly educated, Hitler possessed a fierce intelligence, a strong artistic imagination, and great powers of articulation. His career as a soldier in World War I testified to his courage, and everything he caused to happen afterward showed a strength of will rare at any time. To this he added formidable organizational powers, the capacity to inspire loyalty, strategic clarity balanced by tactical flexibility, and oratory of a high order, spiced with a valuable talent for making people laugh. His creation, virtually from scratch, of a nationwide mass political party that he drove forward to electoral victory in what was then perhaps the best-educated country in the world, all in little over a decade, has few parallels in the history of politics.

All this bears witness to Hitler's abilities. As for his criminal defects and deformations, we are rightly aware of them: his inveterate thuggishness and brutality, his narrow chauvinism, his seemingly unappeasable lust for conquest and domination. And, above all, his anti-Semitism, which, while exacting its toll in millions of innocent human lives, in the end proved fatal to his own world-conquering ambitions.

It is not clear from the record exactly how, why, and when Hitler became a strident anti-Semite. What is clear is that by the early 1920's, he was al-

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ready a violent hater of Jews. As time went on, his anti-Semitism grew until it took entire possession of his intellect and became the dominant factor in all his strategies and decisions.

It is often assumed that Hitler's anti-Semitism helped pave his way to office. I have never seen any convincing attempt to prove this with detailed, statistical arguments. In Austria and parts of southern Germany, anti-Semitism was indeed widespread. But in central and northern Germany, Jews were well assimilated and performed obvious services; there, anti-Semitism had to be incited. My own belief, considering Germany as a whole, is that Hitler's anti-Semitism, along with the street-brawling to which it led, was rather an obstacle to electoral victory. It repelled more voters than it attracted, and diverted attention from the four policies that undoubtedly put him in a position to win large numbers of votes: his absolute opposition to the terms of the Versailles treaty; his radical call for an end to the Weimar economic system, which had promoted hyperinflation and so stripped the middle class of its savings; his equally radical proposals for ending mass unemployment; and, not least, his vehement hostility to Communism, which most Germans hated and feared.

If Hitler achieved power not because of but despite his anti-Semitism, once he was in power his unrelenting obsession with the Jews corroded his judgment at every turn. His increasingly violent persecution of Jews also alienated other nations whose publics might otherwise have been won over to at least some of his aggressive demands in foreign policy. So central was anti-Semitism to his view of the world that the repugnance of others merely confirmed, for him, the existence of the very Jewish conspiracy against which he had warned for many years. It was this same conspiracy, he threatened, that would be to blame for any war that might break out, and this war would in turn provide both occasion and justification for implementing his "final solution" to the "Jewish problem."

Anti-Semitism thus led Hitler to fight a needless war against Britain and France and then, military dominance having been effectively achieved in mainland Europe, to extend the war in such a way that he could not possibly win it. He invaded the Soviet Union, his formerly compliant and quiescent ally, thereby giving Germany a war on two fronts—precisely the configuration he once argued had been fatal to Germany's chances in World War I. Then, when Japan attacked the United States in December 1941, he made the totally irrational decision to declare war on America. Both these acts of madness bore the marks of a collapse of judgment brought on by the intellectual disease of anti-Semitism, the first of them pursued in order to extend the "final solution" eastward and the second out of the lunatic notion that the rulers of the United States were themselves a key component of the Jewish world conspiracy. At the beginning of 1941 Hitler had been in a position of enormous global power; at the end of it, his country's eventual defeat and his own annihilation were certain.

AS AN example of the self-destructive force of anti-Semitism, the case of Hitler and Nazi Germany is paralleled only by what has happened to the Arabs over the course of the last century.

The year 1917 saw both the issuance in London of the Balfour Declaration, authorizing the creation of a Jewish "national home" in Palestine, and the wartime British occupation of Jerusalem, followed thereafter by an international mandate to govern the country. In the Balfour Declaration the British pledged to use "their best endeavors" to further the national-home project, but "without prejudice to the rights of the existing inhabitants." At this stage, many Zionists themselves did not necessarily envisage a sovereign Jewish state emerging in Palestine. Thus, Chaim Weizmann, the prime mover behind the Declaration, imagined that Jewish immigrants, whose ranks included a growing number of scientific and agricultural experts as well as many entrepreneurs, would play a key role in enabling the Arabs of the Middle East to make the most effective use of their newly developing oil wealth.

Had Jewish-Arab cooperation been possible from the start, and had money from oil been creatively invested in education, technology, industry, and social services, the Middle East would now be by far the richest portion of the earth's surface. This has been one of history's greatest lost opportunities, comparable, on a much greater scale, to Spain's mismanagement of its silver wealth in the 16th century. Anti-Semitism, helped by an ingenious forgery, was the key to the disaster.

In the 1890's, the Czarist secret police, anxious to "prove" the reality of the Jewish threat to Russia, had asked its agent in Paris (then, with Vienna, the world center of anti-Semitism) to provide corroborating materials. He took a pamphlet written by Maurice Joly in 1864 that accused Napoleon III of ambitions to dominate the world; re-wrote it, substituting the Jews for Napoleon and dressing up the tale with traditional anti-Semitic details; and titled it *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. It resurfaced

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in Russia after the 1917 coup by the Bolsheviks, who were widely believed by their White Russian opponents to be Jewish-led, and thence made its way to the Middle East. When Weizmann arrived in Jerusalem in 1918, he was handed a typewritten copy by the British commander, General Sir Wyndham Deedes, who said: "You had better read all this with care. It is going to cause you a great deal of trouble in the future."

In 1921, after a full investigation, the London *Times* published a series of articles exposing the origins of the tract and demonstrating beyond all possible doubt that it was a complete invention. But by then the damage that Deedes had warned about was done. Among those who read, and believed, the forgery was Adolf Hitler. Another was Muhammad Amin al-Husseini, head of the biggest landowning family in Palestine. Al-Husseini was already tinged with hatred of Jews, but the *Protocols* gave him a purpose in life: to expel all Jews from Palestine forever. He had innocent blue eyes and a quiet, almost cringing manner, but was a dedicated killer who devoted his entire life to race-murder. In 1920 he was sentenced by the British to ten years' hard labor for provoking bloody anti-Jewish riots. But in the following year, in a reversal of policy for which I have never found a satisfactory explanation, the British appointed a supreme Muslim religious council in Palestine and in effect made al-Husseini its director.

The mufti, as he was called, thereafter created Arab anti-Semitism in its modern form. He appointed a terrorist leader, Emile Ghori, to kill Jewish settlers whenever possible, and also any Arabs who worked with Jews. The latter made up by far the greater number of the mufti's victims. This pattern of murdering Arab moderates has continued ever since, and not just among Palestinians; we see it in Iraq today.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, the mufti rapidly established links with the Nazi regime and later toured occupied Europe under its auspices. He naturally gravitated to Heinrich Himmler, the official in charge of the Nazi genocide, who shared his extreme and violent anti-Semitism; a photo shows the two men smiling sweetly at each other. From the Nazis the mufti learned much about mass murder and terrorism. But he also drew from the history of Islamic extremism: it was he who first recruited Wahhabi fanatics from Saudi Arabia and transformed them into killers of Jews—another tradition that continues to this day.

Over the last half-century, anti-Semitism has been the essential ideology of the Arab world; its practical objective has been the destruction of Israel and the extermination of its inhabitants. And this huge and baneful force, this disease of the mind, has once again had its customary consequence. Just as Hitler ended his life a suicide, having failed in his mission of destroying the Jewish people, so 100 million or more Arabs, marching under the banner of anti-Semitism, have totally failed, despite four full-scale wars and waves of terrorism and *intifadas* without number, to extinguish tiny Israel.

In the meantime, by allowing their diseased obsession to dominate all their aspirations, the Arabs have wasted trillions in oil royalties on weapons of war and propaganda—and, at the margin, on ostentatious luxuries for a tiny minority. In their flight from reason, they have failed to modernize or civilize their societies, to introduce democracy, or to consolidate the rule of law. Despite all their advantages, they are now being overtaken decisively by the Indians and the Chinese, who have few natural resources but are inspired by reason, not hatred.

Yet still the Arabs feed off the ravages of the disease, imbibing and spreading its poison. Even as they keep alive the *Protocols* itself, now published in tens of millions of copies in major Arab capitals, they have embellished its lurid fantasies with their own, homegrown mythologies of Jewish wickedness. Recently the *Protocols* was made into a 41-part TV series, filmed in Cairo and disseminated throughout the Muslim world. Turkey, once a bastion of moderation, with a thriving economy, is now a theater of anti-Semitism, where hatred of Israel breeds varieties of Islamic extremism. At a time when at long last there is real hope of democracy taking root in the Arab and Muslim world, the paralysis continues and indeed is spreading.

In Europe, too, anti-Semitism has returned after being supposedly banished forever in the late 1940's. Fueled by large and growing Muslim minorities, whose mosques and websites propagate hatred of Jews, it has also been nourished by indigenous elements, both intellectual and political. It has even penetrated mainstream parties anxious to garner Muslim votes—New Labor in Britain being a disturbing example.

No less worrying, to my mind, is a related European phenomenon—namely, anti-Americanism. I say "related" because anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism have proceeded hand in hand in today's Europe just as they once did in Hitler's mind (as the unpublished second half of *Mein*

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Kampf decisively shows). Like hatred of Jews, hatred of Americans can similarly be described as a form of racism or xenophobia, especially in its more vulgar manifestations. But among academics and intellectuals, where it is increasingly prevalent, it has more of the hallmarks of a mental disease, becoming more virulent, widespread, and intractable ever since the United States began to shoulder the duties of the war against international terrorism.

After all, to hate Americans is against reason. For centuries, and never more so than at present, the U.S. has harbored the poor and persecuted from the entire world, who have found freedom and prospered on its soil. America continues to receive more immigrants than any other country; its most recent arrivals, including the Cubans, the Koreans, the Vietnamese, and the Lebanese, have become some of the richest groups in the country and are enthusiastic supporters of its democratic norms. Indeed, since American society is now a vibrant microcosm of the human race, I would say that to hate Americans is to hate humanity as a whole.

That anti-Americanism shares many structural characteristics with anti-Semitism is plain enough. In France, as we read in a new study, intellectuals muster as many contradictory reasons for attacking the U.S. as for attacking Jews.* Americans are excessively religious; they are excessively materialistic. They are vulgar money-grubbers; they are vulgar spenders. They hate culture; they are pushy in promoting their own culture. They are aggressive and reckless; they are cowardly. They are stupid; they are exceptionally cunning. They are uneducated; they subordinate everything in life to the goal of sending their children to universities. They build soulless megalopolises; they are rural imbeciles. As with anti-Semitism, this litany of contradictory complaints is fleshed out with demonic caricatures of particular individuals like George W. Bush. Just as 14th-century Christians once held the Jews responsible for the Black Death, Americans are blamed for all the ills of today's world, starting with (real or imaginary) global warming. Particularly among French intellectuals, such demonization has become almost a culture, a way of life, in itself.

Especially disturbing is the spread of the cult in Germany. There, in the 1920's, anti-Semitism was a feature of the social demoralization produced by defeat in World War I. Germany is now becoming demoralized again, for a variety of reasons: appallingly high unemployment; falling living standards relative to the U.S., Britain, and other advanced nations; declining population figures, giving rise to anxiety about the future of the workforce and the security of the pension system; and the inability of the country's leaders to address any of these problems.

In the post-World War II period, ironically, Germany prospered mightily by looking *to* the U.S. for entrepreneurial inspiration as well as political and military leadership. For the past quarter-century, it has fallen increasingly under the spell of France and the French fantasy of a European superstate that will rival America. Precisely during this period of French hegemony, Germany has entered upon an accelerating economic decline, already relative and soon to be absolute.

For Germany now to turn on America as the source of its woes makes no sense at all. But then a country in the grip of a disease of the mind cannot be expected to behave rationally. Despite all its efforts, Germany, it seems to me, has not learned the essential lesson of its Nazi past, namely, to flee the plague of unreason. Looking at Europe as a whole, and at the continuing malaise of the Middle East, I suspect we are approaching a new crisis in the pathology of nations. Once again, America is the only physician with the power and skill to provide a cure, and one can only pray the hour is not too late for the patient to be revived.

* *The American Enemy: the History of French Anti-Americanism* by Phillipe Roger, University of Chicago Press, 536 pp., $35.00.

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Culture in the Age of Blogging

Terry Teachout

TWO YEARS ago next month, I started a blog—that is, a "web log," a website on which I keep a public journal, written in collaboration with the Chicago-based literary critic Laura Demanski (who is known on the blog as "Our Girl in Chicago"). It is called *About Last Night: Terry Teachout on the Arts in New York City*. Laura and I post there each day, and anyone with a computer and access to the Internet can read what we write by going to www.terryteachout.com.

Like nearly all blogs, ours looks like a diary, only in reverse. The entries, which bloggers call postings, are dated chronologically, with the most recent appearing at the top of the screen. Informal in style, and varying in length from a sentence or two to well over 1,000 words, they all touch on some cultural topic currently of interest to one or both of us. In addition to these postings, *About Last Night* can also be used to view many of the articles that Laura and I write for such print-media publications as COMMENTARY, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post*; to read articles by other writers to whom we refer in our postings; to visit any of the hundred-odd "artblogs" and art-related websites listed on our "blogroll"; to order copies of the books, CD's, and DVD's that we mention; and to send e-mail to either of us. We also post a top-five list of "things we like." As I write these words, the list, which is updated every week or so, consists of an off-Broadway play, an art exhibition, a jazz CD, a DVD of an independent film, and a new paperback edition of a long out-of-print novel.

On an average weekday, *About Last Night* receives around 2,000 "page views," a statistic that tells how often some part of our blog is "hit" (i.e., visited) by somebody somewhere in the world. By the time this article appears in print, we will have received a total of more than a million hits. This is roughly 1 percent of the traffic drawn by a very popular political blog like *InstaPundit* (www.instapundit.com), though in neither case is it possible to convert such ambiguous statistics into anything as clear-cut as the audited circulation figures for a magazine or the Nielsen ratings for a TV show. The fact that *About Last Night* is regularly viewed in fourteen time zones may give a better indication of its reach.

Perhaps the best measure of the fast-growing significance of blogs in general is that there are so many of them. According to recent surveys conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 11 million American adults claim to have started blogs and 27 percent of Internet users report that they read them (though 62 percent say they are "not really sure" what a blog is). Most of these, of course, are homemade, purely personal

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ventures of interest mainly to friends and family.

As for blogs dealing solely or primarily with cultural matters, when I started *About Last Night* in the summer of 2003 there were, so far as I know, fewer than a dozen, none written by a critic from the mainstream media (commonly referred to by bloggers as the "MSM"). Now the "blogosphere" contains more artblogs than I can count, some of them by such well-known critics as James Wolcott of *Vanity Fair* (www.jameswolcott.com) and Alex Ross, the classical-music critic of the *New Yorker*, whose blog is called *The Rest Is Noise* (www.therestisnoise.com). Most, however, are the work of writers still in their twenties and thirties who have yet to publish in the MSM or have only just begun to appear there, often as a direct result of the press coverage their blogs have received—a phenomenon that itself offers anecdotal evidence of the significance of this new medium.

Though ours is in many ways a typical blog, *About Last Night* is unusual in that Laura and I write about all the arts.[1] As we explain in a statement posted on the blog:

> Clement Greenberg, the great art critic, believed "that in the long run there are only two kinds of art: the good and the bad. This difference cuts across all other differences in art. At the same time, it makes all art one. . . ." We feel the same way, which is why we write about so many different things. We think many people—maybe most—approach art with a similarly wide-ranging appreciation.

Most artblogs, by contrast, cover only one art form—literary fiction, say, or classical music—and thus tend to have a specialized readership. In this respect they resemble political blogs—like *Daily Kos* (www.dailykos.com), *InstaPundit*, and *Power Line* (www.powerlineblog.com)—which in turn resemble existing political magazines, being written from a clearly defined point of view. (*Daily Kos* is left-wing, *InstaPundit* moderately libertarian, *Power Line* conservative.) And even as political blogs appear to be read for the most part by people of like sympathies, so most artblogs attract readers interested in the specific form they cover.

As a publishing phenomenon, blogs may strike some observers as reminiscent of a development first observed in the early 60's, when "niche" magazines began to supplant mass-circulation titles like *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. But bloggers are not simply imitating the successful marketing strategies of yesterday's editors. Rather, their work is indicative of a sea change in American culture, one that has been accelerated in recent years by the web-based information technologies and "new media" that are now an integral part of the lives of most middle-class Americans.

Goodbye, Common Culture

THE SIMPLEST description of this change is also the starkest one: the common culture of widely shared values and knowledge that once helped to unite Americans of all creeds, colors, and classes no longer exists. In its place, we now have a "balkanized" group of subcultures whose members pursue their separate, unshared interests in an unprecedented variety of ways.

The idea of a common American culture is so central to the American idea itself that it was long taken for granted. Just as young people pledged allegiance to the American flag in school each day, so they studied the same historical events, read many of the same books, heard the same popular songs on radio, and watched the same movies and TV programs. No one, whether in or out of school, seriously attempted to deny that our country's cultural heritage was that of the Judeo-Christian West, and more specifically of what Winston Churchill called "the English-speaking peoples." Though immigrants from other regions were (mostly) welcomed to our shores, it was assumed that their children, at least, would learn English and adopt Western ways, and so become full-fledged Americans.

At the same time, Western culture remained open to non-Western influence, and America in particular became known for its tendency to absorb immigrant folkways, incorporating them into the common culture and in the process giving them a distinctively American slant. This is the true, now-forgotten meaning of the melting-pot metaphor coined by the playwright Israel Zangwill in 1908:

[1] Our postings this past April included a review of the French film *Comme un image* ("Look at Me"); a reminiscence of the painter Neil Welliver, who had just died; brief reflections on the death of Saul Bellow; a series of postings about novels that incorporate the imagined writings of their own fictional characters; a discussion of music in Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, with links to recordings made by real-life musicians Proust had known; reviews of live performances by the jazz musicians Gary Burton and Pat Metheny; a miniature essay on "the alleged obsolescence of live theater"; excerpts from my *Wall Street Journal* reviews of such recently opened Broadway shows as Adam Guettel's *The Light in the Piazza*, Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman*, and the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*; a short excerpt from my unfinished biography of Louis Armstrong; and two sets of links to recent art-related postings by other bloggers.

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America not only changed its newest citizens, but was changed by them in return. "The real American has not yet arrived," proclaimed the hero of Zangwill's *The Melting Pot*, an idealistic Russian Jew who aspires to compose an "American symphony." "He is only in the crucible, I tell you—he will be the fusion of all races, perhaps the coming superman."

Henry James, the farthest possible thing from an American chauvinist, envisioned the same prospect more eloquently in an 1867 letter:

> We [Americans] have exquisite qualities as a race, and it seems to me that we are ahead of the European races in the fact that more than either of them we can deal freely with forms of civilization not our own, can pick and choose and assimilate and in short (aesthetically &c) claim our property wherever we find it. To have no national stamp has hitherto been a defect & a drawback; but I think it not unlikely that American writers may yet indicate that a vast intellectual fusion and synthesis of the various national tendencies of the world is the condition of more important achievements than any we have seen.

Well into the 1960's, it seemed that Zangwill and James had been right. Not only did American artists of all kinds speak in unmistakably American voices, but the importance of their contributions to Western culture had come to be recognized the world over. Further evidence of the validity of the melting-pot model was provided by the emergence of film, jazz, musical comedy, modern dance, and abstract-expressionist painting, each the product of a complex process by which the contributions of many cultures were blended into a new, indigenously American art form or idiom. Thus did the center of cultural gravity in the West shift from an exhausted, war-torn Europe to the United States, which retained its cultural vitality by assimilating outside influences without sacrificing the guiding vision of a common American identity.

Warnings that this vision might be under assault from within were first voiced in the 1970's by neoconservatives (and certain like-minded liberals), who saw a threat to the common culture in the teachings of a new generation of left-wing intellectuals, most of them academics, who were opposed to the traditional understanding of America as a melting pot of ethnic identity.[2] Not until the 80's, however, did their activities come to be more widely seen as a major problem in the making.

Those were the days when William J. Bennett, then President Reagan's Secretary of Education, and E.D. Hirsch, Jr., author of the best-selling *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (1987), were pointing with alarm to such empirical evidence of educational decline in America as the results of the First National Assessment of History and Literature, which revealed that 60 percent of eleventh-graders could not identify the author of *Leaves of Grass* and did not know that the purpose of *The Federalist* was to "gain ratification of the United States Constitution." Even then, however, the problem was initially framed not as a *Kulturkampf*, a "war" on the common American culture, but as a mere failure of public-school teachers to do their jobs adequately. Hirsch, who was not a political conservative, went out of his way to reject "the assumption that I must be advocating a list of great books that every child in the land should be forced to read."

Before long, though, it was clear that something more far-reaching was in the wind. A watershed moment came in 1988, when a group of minority students and faculty members at Stanford University marched in protest against that school's introductory course in Western culture. Led by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, then at the height of his influence as an advocate-without-portfolio for progressive causes, they chanted: "Hey hey, ho ho, Western culture's got to go!" While the battle cry was apparently chosen for its euphony (and because the course in question was called "Western Culture"), it also offered a simplified but nonetheless telling clue to the ultimate purpose of those academics who repudiated the universal significance of Western civilization.

To these academics, the culture of the West was no more significant than any other, while the idea of "quality" in art and literature was merely a construct, imposed by the politically powerful on the culturally powerless. For the insurgents, as Joseph Berger reported in the *New York Times*, "choosing between Virginia Woolf and Pearl Buck . . . involves political and cultural distinctions more than aesthetic ones. 'It's no different from choosing between a hoagie and a pizza,' said Houston Baker, professor of literature at the University of Pennsylvania."

Since then, the American conservative movement as a whole has embraced the cause of pre-

[2] "Thus ethnic enthusiasts, first black and then white, have in effect been telling us for some time now that there is no such thing as a common culture available to all Americans," wrote Norman Podhoretz in "The Idea of a Common Culture" (Commentary, June 1972).

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serving the common culture—or tried to. Arguing about such matters did not come naturally to all conservatives, and especially not to those of classical-liberal inclination whose pedigree had disposed them to concentrate instead on economic and foreign policy. As late as 1995, I was complaining in print of the "slowness with which conservative intellectuals have come to grips with the fact that there is a *Kulturkampf* afoot, and that it is the defining political reality of the post-Soviet era." Calling for a "responsible consensus position on culture," I went on to say:

> What is missing from the present-day American political scene is a Ronald Reagan of culture: a "great communicator" who can dramatize the perils of balkanization, present an affirmative vision of America's common culture, and thereby lead the way back from the brink.[3]

Earlier this year, I was bemused to find my words reprinted on *The American Scene* (www.theamericanscene.com), a blog written by a group of young conservatives. At first I was unable to recall the occasion on which I had written them, and even after remembering, I found it all but impossible to think myself back into the mindset that had produced so apocalyptic a formulation. Not only had no one remotely resembling a "Ronald Reagan of culture" come along in the ensuing decade, but the very idea of a "responsible consensus position on culture" now sounded alien to me.

To be sure, I had not changed my mind about the significance of Western culture, or the dangers of the radical relativism preached by the academics of the 80's. But something else had happened in the meantime: like a baseball game called on account of rain, America's culture war was called on account of obsolescence.

"WE DO not nowadays refute our predecessors, we pleasantly bid them goodbye," George Santayana wrote in *Character and Opinion in the United States*. In such manner did Americans, contrary to all expectation, bid goodbye to the common culture that had once united them. Indeed, they seemed almost indifferent to—or unaware of—its collapse.

Two forces brought about the final disintegration, one demographic, the other technological. The presidential election of 2000 disclosed to the American public at large, including the mainstream news media, a phenomenon that had already been noticed by alert analysts like Michael Barone. Not only had the party affiliation of American voters become closely linked to their cultural views, but people of differing views were choosing to live in different geographical places. Democratic voters were most often opting for large cities, older suburbs, and college towns, while Republicans (as I put it in an essay written immediately after the election) were to be found in a confluence of "rural and small-town America . . . with the fast-growing group of Americans who live in 'exurbia,' the new middle-class communities that are springing up beyond the rim of the older suburbs."[4]

At the time, political commentators at various points on the political spectrum expressed skepticism about the brightness of the line dividing what we now call "Blue America" and "Red America." Today, though, few doubts are voiced about the disaggregation of these two "nations." A mountain of polling data—not to mention the results of a second presidential election—has shown us that they are real places with sharply differing cultural priorities.

The existence of so thoroughgoing a split would seem to offer ideal conditions for a *Kulturkampf*, especially since Blue America is the home of the national news media and the educational establishment, two cultural institutions dominated by liberals (another once-controversial claim that has been substantiated by extensive polling). What I formerly expected to occur as a result of this domination was something not dissimilar to what happened with religious opponents of abortion after *Roe* v. *Wade*. Instead of acquiescing in the imposition of legalized abortion by judicial fiat, opponents of the decision coalesced into a mass movement that now exerts great influence on the Republican party. The rise of this movement also had another, unforeseen effect: raising the consciousness of countless Americans who had hitherto held no settled view on the issue, but were now forced to choose sides.

But I was mistaken. When it came to culture, liberal domination of the news media and the educational establishment failed to trigger an oppositional movement of similar intensity. Why?

One reason was that conservatives changed tactics. Instead of trying to take over those aging institutions, or transform them from within, they launched parallel institutions of their own. Talk radio, the Fox News Channel, the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*, private secondary schools,

[3] "The National Prospect: A Symposium" (COMMENTARY, November 1995).

[4] "Republican Nation, Democratic Nation?" (COMMENTARY, January 2001).

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religious colleges, the burgeoning home-schooling network: all these are aspects of a collective end-run around a liberal establishment whose favor conservatives no longer seek to curry. Only those who insist on living and working in the islands of Blue America are affected by the stigma of liberal disapproval. In Red America, by contrast, a Harvard degree or a favorable mention in the *New Yorker* does not enhance one's social status (a fact of which George W. Bush is famously aware).

No less important, however, was the technology-driven, new-media revolution of which blogging is but one manifestation. Until very recently, the mainstream media had a monopoly on the dissemination of information to large numbers of Americans. News was what the MSM said it was, and nothing more. This began to change in the late 90's, when the earliest blogs appeared on the web.[5] It was natural that conservatives, alienated as they were from the MSM, should have embraced blogging so promptly and enthusiastically. Especially in the wake of 9/11, when a host of amateur political commentators took to the web to write in support of the war on terror, the readership of such right-of-center "warblogs" as *andrewsullivan.com* and *Little Green Footballs* (www.littlegreenfootballs.com) grew dramatically. Left-of-center blogs were slower to catch on, but they are now as popular, if not as numerous, as their conservative and libertarian counterparts.

By 2003, the year I started *About Last Night*, the mainstream media were finally taking reluctant note of political blogs, and 2004 saw a spectacular demonstration of their coming-of-age. Dan Rather, anchorman of the *CBS Evening News* since 1981, was forced into retirement when right-wing bloggers, none of them a journalist in the traditional sense of the word, discovered that a potentially damaging report about President Bush's National Guard service, for which Rather was in part responsible, had apparently been based on forged documents. The MSM initially chose not to cover this story, but the blogosphere decided that it was news—and thereby made it news.

Rather's demise was one sign of the breakup of the big-media information monopoly. Another can be seen in the fast-declining circulation of American newspapers—down 13 percent since the peak year of 1984—and the shrunken ratings of nightly network TV newscasts, which are now viewed by 28.8 million people, down from 52.1 million a quarter-century ago. At the same time, more and more Americans, especially those in their thirties and younger, are turning away from the MSM—only 23 percent between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine read newspapers—to embrace the new web-based media, which offer a proliferating variety of points of view and styles of communication.

Even when they read print-media stories, moreover, web-oriented Americans tend to find them by going to blogs and other websites whose proprietors pick and choose at will from the MSM's offerings, linking to some stories and ignoring others according to their political inclinations. To "get the news" through the prism of a left-wing blog like *Daily Kos* or right-wing websites like *Lucianne.com* (www.lucianne.com) or *RealClear Politics* (www.realclearpolitics.com), all of which offer links to stories originally posted on the sites of such liberal newspapers as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, is a very different experience from reading those newspapers themselves.

Rupert Murdoch, the founder and chairman of News Corporation, recently summed up the implications of these developments in a speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors:

> What is happening right before us is, in short, a revolution in the way young people are accessing news. They don't want to rely on the morning paper for their up-to-date information. They don't want to rely on a godlike figure from above to tell them what's important. And to carry the religion analogy a bit further, they certainly don't want news presented as gospel.
>
> Instead, they want their news on demand, when it works for them. They want control over their media, instead of being controlled by it. They want to question, to probe, to offer a different angle.

What Murdoch did not say, but could have said, is that a country whose citizens live in culturally separate geographic enclaves, send their children to culturally separate schools, and get their news from culturally separate media is a country without a common culture. That is why the American *Kulturkampf* petered out some time around the turn of the 21st century. Instead of staying to fight, Americans withdrew from the battleground, went home to cultivate their own cultural gardens—and started blogging.

[5] For a historical account written from a right-wing perspective, see Hugh Hewitt's *Blog: Understanding the Information Reformation That's Changing Your World* (Nelson, 225 pp., $19.95). Hewitt blogs at www.hughhewitt.com.

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The Culture Archipelago

LIKE MANY other journalists, I was introduced to the concept of blogging by a colleague who told me about Andrew Sullivan's website. Launched late in 2000, it was the first blog to be written by a well-known writer from the mainstream media. No sooner had I started reading *andrewsullivan.com* than it occurred to me that an arts journalist might easily do the same sort of thing. Within a matter of weeks, I had sketched out a rough design for an arts-oriented website based on Sullivan's model. But I lacked the knowledge of computing necessary to execute it—and in addition, no one in the art world to whom I mentioned the concept had the slightest notion of what I was talking about.

I shelved the idea, but kept on looking, and the more I looked, the more interested I became. Bloggers, I learned, wrote as much or as little as they pleased, answered to no editors, and obeyed no rules save for the infinitely malleable ones they made up themselves. Above all, they wrote about whatever they liked and published it whenever they liked. At a time when many American editors and publishers were losing interest in art and culture, this was a crucial consideration.

The loss of interest in art was itself an inextricable component of the collapsing faith in a common culture. As late as the 1970's, the mainstream media had continued to play a key role in introducing their audiences to high culture in America. Not only did the three commercial TV networks broadcast operas, Broadway plays, and art documentaries, but every major newspaper covered the fine arts as a matter of course, and so did such middlebrow newsmagazines as *Time* and *Life*. In 1968 alone, *Time* devoted cover stories to Johann Sebastian Bach, the Joffrey Ballet, Zubin Mehta, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and John Updike.

Starting in the 80's, though, such coverage began to be cut back, at first gradually and then drastically, and artists discovered that writing for the MSM was a zero-sum game. As more space was devoted to mass-culture phenomena like Hollywood movies, TV shows, and commercial pop music, less and less was available for anything else.

After 9/11, with the number of political blogs mushrooming, I decided the time had come to explore the possibilities of this new medium. Even though there was then no practical way to make money from blogging, it seemed to me better to get in on the ground floor than to wait until web-based arts writing might become profitable. User-friendly "platforms," allowing anyone with a computer to start a bare-bones blog, were available by then.[6] I would have used one, but by lucky chance I was invited to write the first in a series of artblogs hosted by *ArtsJournal.com* (www.artsjournal.com), a website providing free access to stories about culture and the arts in English-language newspapers and magazines. Douglas McLennan, the founder of *ArtsJournal.com*, supplied the technological know-how I lacked, and on Monday, July 14, 2003, *About Last Night* went live.

Two things in particular were distinctive about my postings. The first was their tone: not only were they written in the first person, but they were conversational, even intimate in style. This was no accident. I had been struck by how the authors of *andrewsullivan.com* and James Lileks's *The Bleat* (www.lileks.com/bleats) disdained the artificially detached voice of the professional journalist, choosing instead to write in the confessional manner of the familiar essayist, often using anecdotal material drawn from their private lives to illustrate their commentaries on public affairs. In this respect, as I would remark on the first anniversary of *About Last Night*, blogs struck me as "the 21st-century counterpart of the periodical essays of the 18th century, the *Spectators* and *Ramblers* and *Tatlers* that supplied familiar essayists with what was then the ideal vehicle for their intensely personal reflections."

The second distinctive thing I have already alluded to: the broad range of subjects about which I chose to blog, a mixture resembling what one might have found in the "back of the book" of any issue of *Time* published between, say, 1940 and 1980. This, too, was deliberate, and not only because my own interests were diverse. I had come to feel that the collapse of the middlebrow cultural regime was depriving ordinary Americans of a necessary exposure to the unfamiliar. While I had no illusions about the culture-changing potential of a single blog, it seemed to me that if I were to devote more or less equal space on *About Last Night* to books, theater, dance, film, the visual arts, and music of all kinds, it would at least have the beneficial effect of encouraging my own readers to seek out new cultural experiences they might not otherwise have had.

In the beginning, I thought of my as-yet-un-

[6] One of the most popular is *BlogSpot*, whose website, www.blogger.com, contains a straightforwardly written explanation of how to start a blog. Apart from the unpaid labor of the blogger, the price of operating such a blog is relatively trivial. Not counting the expense of cable access to the Internet and a small annual fee for registering the domain name, it can run as little as $10.00 a month.

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launched blog as a transitional enterprise that would develop over time into a web-based electronic magazine about the arts. To this end I invited Laura Demanski to join me as a collaborator early on. The innovation proved highly productive. Not only did her different interests and points of view add variety to the blog's offerings, but our public "conversations" on subjects of mutual interest became, in the opinion of many readers, one of the most appealing features of *About Last Night*.

Over time, though, the idea of starting a full-scale online magazine grew less attractive. As I came to see, blogging, young as it was, had already evolved into an end in itself, a medium whose distinctive properties arose from the opportunities for personal expression that it offered. Hence there seemed no reason to do what others were doing in the mainstream media, much less what I myself was doing there. Rather, I came to view the two as complementary. As well as using *About Last Night* to bring my print-media work to the attention of more readers by posting links to online versions of my pieces, I started treating it as a kind of public sketchbook in which I reacted to the passing cultural scene, throwing out unformed ideas that I would later develop more systematically and at greater length in articles and books.

Soon after the launch of *About Last Night*, I learned of the existence of several other artblogs. Nathalie Chicha's *Cup of Chicha* (www.nchicha.com), Maud Newton's *Maud Newton* (www.maudnewton.com/blog), Tyler Green's *Modern Art Notes* (now at www.artsjournal.com/man), Laila Lalami's *MoorishGirl* (www.moorishgirl.com), Lizzie Skurnick's *Old Hag* (www.oldhag.com), and the pseudonymous *2 Blowhards* (www.2blowhards.com), for instance, had all been started in 2001 and 2002.

Most of these early artblogs were broadly similar to *About Last Night* in style and overall approach, though they tended to be more tightly focused in subject matter. Some of the people who wrote them were aspiring authors. But others, like Lynn Sislo, an Oklahoma housewife who wrote *Reflections in D Minor* (www.aeternam626.com), were literary amateurs who started blogging with no other purpose than, as Sislo explained, "to give the world a piece of my mind."

About Last Night, then, was not the first artblog. It was, however, the first to be written by a critic already active in the mainstream media, and as such it appears to have had a galvanizing effect on other writers who, like me, had been initially hesitant to take the plunge. It helped, too, that Laura and I went out of our way to find and spread the word about other artblogs. I also publicized our own blog by mentioning it in my print-media pieces and at my public appearances.

Whether or not any of this activity helped to "legitimize" the form, it is certainly true that many other artblogs were launched in the wake of my entry into the blogosphere. Some were part of the original group hosted by *ArtsJournal.com*, while a few others were independently launched by established critics. Most, however, were the work of talented unknowns. In addition, a number of professional artists, most of them musicians, have started their own blogs.

What was and is striking about the best artblogs, most of which can be found on our blogroll, has been their consistently high quality—and the fact that virtually all of them seem to have sprung up from nowhere. Only a few of the first artbloggers lived in New York City, America's nominal culture capital. The rest were scattered across the country (and, in a few cases, outside it). One might think of them as comprising an archipelago, a network of free-standing, independent commentators who self-publish their thoughts where they can be heard by anyone who cares to listen.

This phenomenon appears to be something new in the history of Western culture. Certainly it is as different as can be imagined from the geographically concentrated, city-centered circles of artistic and intellectual activity that have hitherto played the dominant role in cultural formation. It is also qualitatively different from the culture-forming activity one finds in the contemporary academy. Though artbloggers, like artists themselves, tend to have, and to express, left-of-center political views, most are resolutely anti-ideological when it comes to the making of actual critical judgments.[7] This, I find, is no less true of those artbloggers who are themselves academics.

As has often been remarked, blogging is an *amateur* culture in the exact sense of the word. Even those bloggers who are artistic or intellectual professionals of one kind or another are motivated chiefly by love of the things they write about. And whereas journalism in America has come to be regarded as a "profession" open only to trained, credentialed specialists, life in the blogosphere more closely resembles the European notion of journal-

[7] Laura and I do not write about politics on *About Last Night*, both because our views are not identical and because (as I noted on the blog last year) we believe that "it's important that there be at least one politics-free space in the blogosphere where people who love art can read about it—and nothing else."

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ism as a skill that can be practiced by anyone who knows how to write and has something to say.

It is noteworthy, therefore, that the mainstream media in America are now starting to reach out to artbloggers, despite their lack of journalistic credentials. This is not a simple matter of bet-hedging. Maud Newton's popular literary blog may be less widely read than her print-media book reviews, but its readers, many of whom are themselves professional authors and editors, constitute a self-selected audience of people passionately interested in literary fiction and the publishing business. If enough of them choose to read her blog every day—as they do—then she becomes *de facto* an important figure in the literary world, no matter who she is or where she went to school.

LIKE LAURA and me, most artbloggers link to and write about one another, at times with an enthusiasm that some readers (and bloggers) have found clubbish or sophomoric. Indeed, the first article about artblogging to appear in the MSM, Jennifer Howard's "It's a Little Too Cozy in the Blogosphere," was a sharp-tongued critique:

> What began as the ultimate outsider activity—a way to break the newspaper and TV stranglehold on the gathering and dissemination of information—is turning into the same insider's game played by the old establishment media the bloggerati love to critique. The more blogs you read and the more often you read them, the more obvious it is: they've fallen in love with themselves, each other, and the beauty of what they're creating. The cult of media celebrity hasn't been broken by the Internet's democratic tendencies; it's just found new enabling technology.[8]

Howard was not altogether wrong to chide the first bloggers, myself included, for "back-scratching." But she was mistaken to suppose that blogging had become "a popularity contest in which the value of information is confused with the cool quotient of the person spreading it." Without question, the most significant aspect of blogging, as of web-based media in general, is its democratization of the means of distributing information to large numbers of people. This has made possible what media bloggers call "open-source" or "citizens' journalism," in which amateur journalists use the web to disseminate reportage and commentary that in many cases has proved superior to the product of so-called professional journalists. And now that bloggers can make money through web-based advertising, we are also seeing the appearance of the first "stand-alone journalists," a term that refers to self-publishing, self-supporting professional journalists who are unaffiliated with the MSM.

In an analogous development, professional artists have started using the web to market their wares without resort to distributors or other middlemen. Earlier this year, the jazz composer Maria Schneider received a Grammy award for *Concert in the Garden*, an album by her big band that was not issued by any record label or sold in any "brick-and-mortar" record store. Instead, Schneider recorded *Concert in the Garden* at her own expense and sells it only on her website, www.mariaschneider.com, making use of a new web-based system called ArtistShare that allows listeners to buy CD's by mail or download the contents directly to their home computers as digital sound files.

Schneider raised part of the money needed to record *Concert in the Garden* by allowing visitors to her website to purchase different levels of "participation" in the project. She also acts as her own music publisher, selling scores and parts to her compositions in the form of digital files that the purchaser downloads and prints out on his own equipment. The success of *Concert in the Garden* has inspired other prominent jazz musicians to release their work via ArtistShare.

What is true for producers is true for consumers. It is now possible to buy tens of thousands of commercial recordings of every imaginable sort—jazz, pop, classical, country, blues—from online "music stores" (like Apple's iTunes) that make them available in the form of "mp3" sound files. These can be downloaded by the customer and played back on a home computer or on one of the new handheld mp3 players. Similar methods of electronic distribution will soon be adopted by film studios and book publishers (whose marketing strategies have already been dramatically transformed by the rise of online bookstores like amazon.com), as well as by individual filmmakers and writers who wish to deal directly with their audiences.

The day of the information middleman is not yet over, but it is drawing to a close.

Unsplitting the Atom

HOW ELSE does the culture archipelago differ from the city-based cultural enclaves of the past? Above all, it is decentralized to the point of atomization. Its "citizens" rarely meet face to face, nor do they flock to performing-arts centers at ap-

[8] *Washington Post*, November 16, 2003.

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pointed hours or read mass-circulation newspapers and middlebrow magazines. Instead, they pursue their own specialized interests, intensely but also narrowly, making use of web-based electronic media that are available, as the saying goes, "24/7." If they cannot get what they want when they want it, they need only change the channel.

This sped-up cycle of cultural supply and demand was pungently characterized by Richard Brookhiser in a column occasioned by Rupert Murdoch's recent speech:

> Murdoch was being polite. What he was telling his colleagues was: newspapers are dead.
>
> Newspapers were more than the particular paper you read. They were part of the dawn, with toothpaste, coffee, and trying to find the right sock. You got a rape and a war, weather and box scores, James Reston or Jimmy Breslin. . . . Now that's all gone. Now, three or six times a day, you get Glenn and Jonah and Mickey and Andrew and Drudge and Debka.[9] You get *Page 3* and hyper-Catholics, Bush Lied and *Iraq the Model*, hobbits in prehistoric Indonesia and elephants who foresaw the tsunami. You definitely do not get Thomas L. Friedman. If you need to, you can check a line in Blackstone's *Commentaries* or "The Duke of Earl." It's like channel-surfing, only there are thousands more channels and you spend even less time on any of them. It all takes 15 minutes, and after a meal or a trip to the water cooler, you do it all again.

When newspapers do become obsolete—which will happen sooner rather than later—it will be because their functions have been taken over by a variety of web-based media that can do them better. (Blogs, for example, are already superseding op-ed pages.) A few existing papers will rise to the challenge and transform themselves into online publications, reconceived in such a way as to take advantage of the unique properties of the web. Most, however, will not, since established institutions rarely if ever transform themselves, least of all in response to external threats to their survival. Instead, they are replaced by new institutions that spring up in response to those same threats, seeing them as opportunities for long-overdue change.

But as Brookhiser's description also implies, the culture archipelago is no utopia, any more than was America in the fast-receding days of the common culture. Nor are blogs alone capable of replacing newspapers, or even magazines, notwithstanding the triumphalist fantasies of certain bloggers with overactive imaginations.

Blogs, after all, have their own built-in limitations. Chief among these is a tendency toward superficiality. While a blogger can write at any length, few seem inclined to post the kind of full-length essay that is the stock in trade of an intellectual magazine like COMMENTARY. Most favor brief, suggestive postings that imply more than they state, and they no less typically prefer hit-and-run assertion to detailed argument, verbal slugfests to coolly reasoned refutations. Moreover, for all the contempt in which they affect to hold the mainstream media, too many bloggers remain in their thrall, complaining about what the media do wrong instead of figuring out how to do other things right.

These limitations, however, matter only to those who see the blog as a substitute for an existing medium, rather than as a new medium that does new things in new ways. I do not look to *About Last Night* as an outlet for my extended essays. Those I continue to publish in COMMENTARY and other print magazines while also linking to them on my blog, which I use as a "portal" through which interested people can find out about the full range of my work as a writer and commentator. Such "portals," made possible by the fact that most newspapers and magazines (COMMENTARY among them) now also publish their content on linkable websites, are a good example of something blogs do that could not have been done, or even imagined, prior to their invention.

SIMILARLY, *About Last Night* allows me to post spontaneously and immediately in response to newsworthy events: the death of an artist, the announcement of a major literary award, a performance from which I have just returned. Just as important, it allows *me* to decide which of these events are newsworthy, rather than having to talk an editor into letting me write about them, or being talked by an editor into writing about them, often days or weeks after the fact.

No less unique to blogging is its potential for interactivity. When I see a posting on another blog or website that interests me, I can link to it on *About Last Night*, thus allowing my readers to go read the entire posting for themselves and then return to my blog at will. Should they wish to get in touch with me, they need only click the e-mail "button" prominently displayed on the screen. Not

[9] In other words, Glenn "InstaPundit" Reynolds, Jonah Goldberg of *National Review Online* (www.nationalreview.com), the neoliberal journalist Mickey Kaus (www.kausfiles.com), Andrew Sullivan, *Drudge Report* (www.drudgereport.com), and *DEBKAfile* (www.debka.com), a gossipy, notoriously unreliable Israel-based site whose authors cover the Middle East.

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only do I read and reply to all of my mail, but I post and comment on excerpts from letters of general interest. Sometimes readers ask me to write about a particular topic—and not infrequently I take them up on the idea. (It was a reader of *About Last Night* who suggested that I write the essay about Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau published in last month's COMMENTARY.)

Many blogs even have a "comments" feature that can be used by visitors to post e-mail directly to the public pages of a blog, thus allowing something close to a real-time conversation between a blogger and his readers.[10] In addition, bloggers converse not only with their readers but with one another, remarking on postings that interest them. A posting that draws the attention of other bloggers, whether favorable or otherwise, can circulate throughout the blogosphere in a matter of hours.

This interactivity appears at first glance to contradict the atomizing tendencies of blogging. In fact, both things are intrinsic to the nature of the culture archipelago, and of the new media in general. Because they are so radically decentralized, blogs inevitably tend to pull us apart—yet they also facilitate the formation of personal associations that need not be limited by considerations of geography. My co-blogger Laura Demanski moved from New York to Chicago a decade ago, yet our collaboration on *About Last Night* could not be closer than if she lived across the street. Three of my best friends are bloggers whom I first "met" online, and only later face to face. This is not clubbishness: it is the way in which virtual communities are built.

ARTBLOGS ARE barely more than three years old. It is far too soon to say which of their opposing tendencies, the atomizing or the embracing, will have a more profound effect on the wider culture they have already started to shape. It may be that blogging will encourage the creation of a new kind of common culture, exerting something of the same unifying force as did the old middlebrow media (and as *About Last Night* seeks to do). Or not: if the experience of political blogs is any indication, blogging may be more likely to foster discrete subcultures of shared interest, larger and more cohesive but nonetheless separate.

The question then becomes whether the memberships of these subcultures will overlap to any substantial degree. I think they will—that, in fact, they already do. Readers of *About Last Night* can use our blogroll for access to many other blogs whose authors post about everything from animated cartoons to Brazilian music. Two dozen of these are "omniblogs" which, like ours, cut across conventional cultural categories to cover a wide variety of subjects. Our e-mail indicates that while some of our readers are mainly interested in what we post about their own preferred topics, at least as many, if not more, have been inspired by us to explore new areas of interest.

One thing of which I am sure is that the common culture of my youth is gone for good. It was hollowed out by the rise of ethnic "identity politics," then splintered beyond hope of repair by the emergence of the web-based technologies that so maximized and facilitated cultural choice as to make the broad-based offerings of the old mass media look bland and unchallenging by comparison. For all the nostalgia with which I look back on the days of the Top 40, the Book-of-the-Month Club, and *The Ed Sullivan Show*, I prefer to make my own cultural decisions, and I welcome the ease with which the new media permit me to do so.

At the same time, however, I still feel the need for a common space in which Americans can come together to talk about the things that matter to us all. And so my hope is that the blogosphere, for all its fissiparous tendencies, will evolve over time into just such a space. No doubt there will always be shouting in the blogosphere, but it need not all be past each other. When the history of blogging is written a half-century from now, its chroniclers may yet record that the highest achievement of the Internet, a seemingly impersonal piece of postmodern technology, turned out to be its unprecedented ability to bring creatures of flesh and blood closer together.

[10] *ArtsJournal.com* blogs do not contain "comment" boards, which must be monitored closely by an editor in order to delete incoming unsolicited commercial e-mail and libelous or otherwise inappropriate postings.

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Bush's Calling

Wilfred M. McClay

AMONG ALL the things that liberals loathe about George W. Bush, his religious fervor would seem to be at or near the top of the list. Some consider him a mere pretender, or a hypocrite, lashing out at his post-9/11 persona as a world-transforming warrior with bumper-sticker barbs like "Who would Jesus bomb?" For the most part, though, liberal animus toward Bush's faith comes from the opposite direction. It is his religious *sincerity* that infuriates and frightens, especially when contrasted with the easy and empty Bible-toting of, say, a Bill Clinton.

One does not have to dig very deep to explain this hostility. There are the familiar issues of the culture war—the "values" divide between red states and blue. There is also Bush's personal manner, seemingly perfectly calculated to grate on the sensibilities of worldly, secularist elites. But something more profound may be at work as well. What liberals find objectionable about Bush as a born-again Christian is the kind of politician he has become by means of and on account of his faith. But what may be most discomfiting of all is the degree to which, in this regard, he has successfully laid claim to so many elements of the liberals' own discarded past, and thereby begun to reverse the polarities of American politics.

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EVERYONE IS familiar with the outlines of Bush's personal story, which retraces the biblical tale of the prodigal son. The fortunate scion of a wealthy and prominent family, he was born with all the advantages of social position but, as a young man, was also intensely burdened by them. He was the class clown, his jaunty, towel-snapping manner concealing a sense of inner purposelessness. He also had a drinking problem, the exact dimensions of which remain unclear, although it was debilitating enough for Bush himself to consider it a near-permanent obstacle in his life.

At forty, according to his cousin John Ellis, George W. Bush was "on the road to nowhere." He had gone to Andover, Yale, and Harvard Business School, and run for Congress, and yet he had come up short every time, in his own eyes and in the eyes of others. As Ellis summed up, "To go through every stage of life and be found wanting and know that people find you wanting, that's a real grind."

What changed between being lost in a dark wood at forty and a presidential candidacy at fifty-two? As is well known, Bush underwent a religious conversion. It was the key to his transformation into a focused, determined, and remarkably self-disciplined man. This conversion followed the classic evangelical pattern and occurred under classic evangelical influences, not the least significant of which was a private conversation in the summer of 1985 with the Reverend Billy Graham.

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The subsequent growth in Bush's faith was fostered less by formal membership in or attendance at church than by participation in nondenominational Bible-study groups in his hometown of Midland, Texas. Such "parachurch" organizations, a growing staple of the evangelical subculture, have tended to absorb many of the characteristic functions of the institutional church. Typical in his indifference to denominational structures, and happy to worship in churches of every variety, Bush focused instead on the Christocentric aspects of evangelical faith, and the transformation of heart and conscience that comes with them. These, for him, have always been the core of the matter.

In December 1999, during a debate in Des Moines among the Republican presidential candidates, Bush was asked to identify his favorite philosopher. He shocked almost everyone present by responding, unhesitatingly, "Christ. Because he changed my heart." Following up, Bush explained that "when you accept Christ as the savior, it changes your heart. It changes your life. And that's what happened to me."

At the time, this was widely regarded as a boneheaded blunder. But there can be little doubt that it was also an honest answer—and smart politics, too. Bush's emphasis on the need for personal change and redemption resonated widely and deeply, expressing needs that millions of Americans, including many having no affiliation with the religious Right, could recognize in their own lives.

This redemptive subtext was especially evident when candidate Bush employed generational rhetoric meant to puncture the inflated self-regard of the baby-boom generation. His acceptance speech at the 2000 Republican convention, which opened with a salute to the achievements of his father's generation, was built around a remarkably critical consideration of his own generation—flush with prosperity and promise, but sadly lacking in a sense of larger purpose. "What," he wondered, "is asked of us?" Would "we have grown up before we grow old," and would we be prepared to respond to "our own appointment with greatness"? Such rhetoric had unmistakably personal roots. But it also created a bond between him and his audience that no poll could measure, and no *New York Times* editorialist was likely to comprehend.

THE HISTORIAN Mark Noll has argued that the essence of evangelical piety is to be found not in works of theology or liturgy but in the great evangelical hymns. If that is so, then one can learn a great deal about Bush's faith by studying his two favorite examples of the genre, both written in the 18th century: John Newton's "Amazing Grace" and Charles Wesley's "A Charge to Keep I Have."

The first is an account of personal redemption, written by a former slave-trader and expressing awed gratitude for the divine grace that "saved a wretch like me"—a grace that found him when he was morally lost, rescued him from life's storms, and replaced his blindness with sight. The second, a great favorite of reform-minded Methodists, makes a wonderful complement to the first. It is a succinct statement of the obligations a believer takes on once he has accepted the gift of "amazing grace." For, according to "A Charge to Keep I Have," it is not enough to revel in one's salvation. There is work to be done in the here and now:

> To serve the present age,
> my calling to fulfill;
> O may it all my powers engage
> to do my Master's will!
>
> Arm me with jealous care,
> as in Thy sight to live,
> and oh, Thy servant, Lord,
> prepare a strict account to give!

A Charge to Keep was the title of Bush's pre-presidential memoir. It is also the title of a painting, inspired by the hymn, that hangs by his desk in the Oval Office. The painting depicts a rider spurring his horse to climb a steep, difficult trail—a perfect metaphor for the application of discipline and determination to a challenging task.

Taken together, these two hymns capture the core of Bush's religious experience. Without God's gracious and saving work in us, our lives are ungovernable. With God, we are freed to govern ourselves, and empowered to live exemplary and responsible lives.

The behavioral implications of this are far-reaching. As a social philosophy, evangelicalism has always existed in tension with settled ways, established hierarchies, and customary usages. Placing powerful emphasis upon the individual and his ability to have an unmediated relationship with the Deity and with Holy Scripture, it tends to treat all institutions, even the church itself, as if their existence and authority were provisional and subordinate.

As a historical matter, the adherents of evangelicalism, especially in its high-octane forms, have often done battle with the institutional status quo. Churches were the first to feel the force of evan-

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gelical fervor, which saw them as mere vehicles for the proclamation of the Gospel and the achievement of a richer and more vibrant individual faith. In the great revivalist movements of early American history, evangelicalism swept up and down the eastern seaboard, dividing church after church between "new" and "old" believers. By the 19th century, it had become a powerful force for what the historian Nathan Hatch has dubbed "the democratization of American Christianity." And this, in turn, helped to bring about the democratization of American culture as a whole.

But it was democratization of a highly particular kind. The animating ideal of evangelicalism is the freely choosing individual. Such freedom, however, is never self-sufficient; its necessary companion and counterpart is constraint. The essence of evangelicalism, in the words of the historian Daniel Walker Howe, is a commitment "undertaken voluntarily, consciously, and responsibly" by an individual willing to embrace a discipline at once "liberating and restrictive."

From the time of the founding up to the end of the 19th century, the ultimate goal of most religiously-inspired social reform was to create the necessary conditions for what Howe refers to as the "construction of the self." Evangelical reformers assumed that there was an objective moral order to which individuals were subordinate. But it was not enough for the constraints of this order to be applied externally, like so many fences and leashes. Control, which led to a kind of moral self-sufficiency, needed to be internalized, with the help of institutions like the family, the church, the neighborhood—and the polity. Indeed, in the literature of the era, the relationship between the self-governing soul and the self-governing polity appears as a recurring motif. This was an era that unabashedly extolled the "self-made" man, and that regarded not self-liberation but self-improvement as the great moral imperative.

Horace Mann, for example, the pioneer of public education, saw the schools as a means to inculcate the beneficent habits of self-regulation; in these institutions, naturally anarchic individuals would become fit to direct not just their own lives but the affairs of the wider community. The clergyman William Ellery Channing, in his famous 1838 lecture "Self-Culture," argued that God had endowed the human race with the extraordinary power of "acting on, determining, and forming ourselves," and the selves Channing had in mind were as much social and political as individual. Although neither of these men was, in the strictest sense, an evangelical, in this respect there was little difference between them and such arch-evangelical contemporaries as Charles Grandison Finney.

The ideal of the self-governing individual stands behind many of the great reform movements of pre-Civil War America: temperance, women's rights, health faddism, and of course abolitionism. Slavery was a systemic affront to the evangelical ideal. It not only prevented slaves from being self-governing and fully realized individuals; it just as surely prevented their masters from achieving the same status. It corrupted the entire slave-holding society, as the very economic backwardness of the South seemed to demonstrate. A century later, this same prophetic brand of evangelical Christianity would energize the civil-rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's, giving Southern blacks the courage and fortitude to challenge the segregationist social order.*

NONE OF this is to deny that George W. Bush is a political conservative. But he is one whose priorities have been continuously informed and shaped by a distinctive religious tradition. Looking at both the domestic and foreign sides of the ledger, one could even contend that—within the limits imposed by prudence and exigency—the Bush administration's policies have formed a fairly seamless web. This has been especially the case in the aftermath of 9/11, with its catalyzing influence on the President's sense of mission (or his "charge to keep"). The principle that unifies them is the characteristic evangelical emphasis on the ultimate value of the responsible, self-governing individual.

The Bush agenda relies on a certain anthropology. It assumes that human flourishing, whether at home or abroad, is possible only when two conditions are met: first, the political and social freedom to choose one's own pursuits; and second, laws and social institutions to encourage individuals to choose *well*, that is, to live responsibly within self-imposed moral limits. Thus, full self-government is not possible under the yoke of a political or religious tyranny. But neither is it possible in a society in which the formation of character is left completely to chance, or when government policies sever the link between a person's actions and their consequences.

The President's zeal for the international promotion of freedom, and particularly for the causes of human rights and religious liberty, clearly owes a

* David Chappell argues this point forcefully in his recent book, *A Stone of Hope*. See my article, "The Church of Civil Rights," in the June 2004 COMMENTARY.

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great deal to this view, and to the general Christian emphasis upon the infinite worth of every individual. Here is how Bush put it in his second inaugural address, whose sermon-like (and Lincolnian) qualities are unmistakable:

> From the day of our founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this earth has rights, and dignity, and matchless value, because they bear the image of the Maker of heaven and earth. Across the generations we have proclaimed the imperative of self-government, because no one is fit to be a master, and no one deserves to be a slave.

The domestic counterpart of this international vision is the "ownership society," an elaboration of the "compassionate conservatism" that Bush advanced as governor of Texas and in his 2000 campaign. "For the past thirty years," he declared in his gubernatorial inaugural, "our culture has steadily replaced personal responsibility with collective guilt. This must end. The new freedom Texas seeks must be matched with renewed personal responsibility." These words were no jeremiad; rather, they were a call to reorient social policy toward creating the conditions—in welfare, education, public safety, family life—in which personal transformation could occur.

Bush's evangelicalism also helps to explain his willingness to depart from what might be conventionally regarded as conservative orthodoxy. There is, for example, the audacity of his foreign policy, which some conservatives have not hesitated to condemn as reckless and as a very un-conservative form of utopianism. And there are his relatively favorable views of federal social and educational programs, his sensitivity to issues of racial injustice and reconciliation, his softness on immigration, his faith-based initiative, his African AIDS initiative.

All of these are best explained by his religious convictions, which, trumping more traditionally conservative impulses, have made him something other, and more, than the oil-and-gas man of his early adulthood. They have made him, indeed, something of a progressive.

THIS BRINGS us back to the reactions of liberals to Bush's religiosity. In the end, I suspect, what they find so upsetting is less his appeal to traditional morality than his claim to speak for human progress. This is territory long claimed by liberals as their exclusive property. Thanks to Bush, however, it is the Republican party that has now come to be associated with grand commitments to comprehensive reform, intended not merely for the sake of the American nation but for the general good of humanity.

The effort to capture the spirit of progressive change for the benefit of the conservative party did not, to be sure, originate with Bush. It started in earnest during the Reagan presidency—and it did not have an easy time of it. By the early 1990's, one of its most forthright and coherent expressions was Newt Gingrich's "conservative opportunity society," a notion that made some headway before foundering on the rocks of its creator's problematic persona.

Bush's "compassionate conservatism" has had its own problems, and has certainly been subjected to withering fire from both ends of the ideological spectrum. Yet after the dust settles, future historians may well conclude that the events of the past quarter-century have slowly woven a new guiding narrative for American conservatives, and that Bush's presidency marks a point of both coalescence and departure—the point where it has become entirely plausible for Republicans to assert that they are the party of progress and of human liberation.

Democrats may still snicker at such an assertion, but they do so at their own risk. For if it is plausible to suggest that the conservative party is the party of progress, it is even more plausible to argue that the liberal party has become the party of opposition to change—the party of entrenched interests, of an obsolete and shrinking labor movement, of hidebound public bureaucracies and of the even more hidebound politics of race, class, and sex, of disdain for the free and democratic expression of traditional moral values, and of a reflexive distrust of American power and American influence as a force for good in the world. The grand liberal ideas of national purpose and the public interest, given classic formulation nearly a century ago in Herbert Croly's *The Promise of American Life* (1909), are all but gone now—either appropriated by conservatives or frittered away on multilateralist chimeras abroad, endless litigation at home, and the futile comedy of identity politics. There are times when it seems liberals are determined to repay the Right's theft of progressive themes with a theft of their own, adopting *National Review*'s famous slogan about standing athwart history and yelling "Stop."

How did this reversal happen? As irony would have it, part of the answer lies in liberalism's own vexed history with evangelicalism. The Social Gospel movement of the early 20th century, one of modern liberalism's great antecedents, drew freely on the moral legacy of Protestantism. But rather

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than focusing on the reform of individuals, it located "sin" in the structural pathologies of industrial society.

Albion Small of the University of Chicago, the first occupant of an American academic chair in sociology, saw social science as "the holiest sacrament open to man," and regarded its task as helping to bring about "an approximation of the ideal of social life contained in the Gospels." But Small's aim was anything but evangelical; rather, it was to destroy what he called "the individualistic superstition," the view that men and women controlled their own fates. In fairly short order, the pious rhetoric disappeared. Social science became a largely secular affair, and religion came to be seen as an impediment rather than an accessory to the progress of liberal reform.

By the 1970's, it was becoming clear to observers writing in magazines like COMMENTARY and the *Public Interest* that such "scientific" approaches to social problems had fallen far short of unambiguous success, and perhaps had even worsened the very conditions they sought to ameliorate. With the sweeping welfare-reform measures of a decade ago, passed under a Democratic President, policymakers in effect conceded that manipulating social aggregates—the liberal tool par excellence—was not enough; programs had to take into account the dynamics of character-formation and the ways that incentives shape the lives of individuals. In a word, blaming "society" was out, and the goal of self-governance was back.

This is clearly where George W. Bush's heart lies. In that sense, his approach picks up where the evangelical reformers of the 19th century left off—and where the liberal reformers of the 20th century, starting from the same place, set off in an altogether different direction. No wonder today's liberals loathe him.

WHERE DOES this leave us? On the whole, an ambitious evangelical conservatism is assuredly a positive development in American life. But we cannot help acknowledging points of concern. To begin with, there is always sound reason to be wary of the injection of religion into politics of any stripe, even when its countenance is genial and tolerant and its immediate effects seem to be beneficial. Paradoxically, too, some of the most inviting features of evangelicalism—its warm embrace of individualism, its optimism about human possibility—are also among the most troubling.

In an insightful analysis of the woes of today's Democratic party, Martin Peretz, the editor-in-chief of the *New Republic*, lamented recently that liberals have lost touch with their intellectual roots. "The most penetrating thinker of the old liberalism, the Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, is virtually unknown in the circles within which he once spoke and listened," Peretz writes, conjecturing that this is "perhaps because he held a gloomy view of human nature." But it is equally true that there is not much of Niebuhr, or original sin, or any other form of Calvinist severity in the current outlook of the Bush administration. In its case, this reflects the energizing good cheer of evangelical conservatism, as well as, no doubt, the preferences of an American electorate with an aversion to bad news.

Optimism is, in most respects, a political strength, and an appropriate way for democratic leaders to present themselves to the public. But just as individualism needs the constraints of religion and morality, so optimism needs the ballast of memory and a sense of the tragic to give it resiliency and depth. There is a reason why the Christian tradition distinguishes between hope, which is considered a theological virtue, and optimism, which is not. Conservatism will be like the salt that has lost its savor if it abandons its mission to remind us of what Thomas Sowell has called "the constrained vision" of human existence—the vision that sees life as a struggle full of unintended consequences and tragic dilemmas, involving people whose noblest efforts often fail, sometimes miserably so.

As Abraham Lincoln reminded us in his own second inaugural address, the hand of Providence may be present in our reversals as well as in our triumphs. Hope can survive such reversals, even when optimism cannot. It strikes me that this remains a useful and important lesson, especially for a nation with, at the moment, so many charges to keep.

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The Life of Art
A Story

Joseph Epstein

DRIVING DOWN Sheridan Road, heading north in the right lane, I noticed from the rear a body, a walk, a carriage that looked familiar. It's Janet, I thought. She was wearing a brownish, leopard-skin-patterned blouse, an ankle-length denim skirt with lace trim along the bottom, sandals. I pulled over to the curb. She bent to pick up something, perhaps a coin. Although I couldn't get a clear view of her face, I saw thick gray hair and rimless glasses. I was on the point of calling out—"Janet?"—but, after the slightest hesitation, drove on.

Janet Natalsky had been a peripheral character in our very social high school—she lacked the clothes or the easy good looks required for any position closer to the center—but she didn't carry herself like one. She carried herself as if she were a great beauty, which she wasn't: she was tall, with poor skin and thickish features, and unruly red hair with a too-low hairline. Better, she carried herself as if she were in possession of a great secret, which, it turns out, she was. As I would discover in later years, Janet's secret was that she, alone in all the world, knew that she was destined to be an artist—specifically, a writer.

I, on the other hand, had no secrets at all. In those sweet adolescent days, I was perfectly happy to luxuriate dab in the center. A minor athlete, a jokey Jakey, a casual master of the arts of conformity, I floated through high school completely without care, as if on an inner tube on a clear lake on a balmy summer's day that lasted four full years.

I noticed Janet Natalsky, knew who she was, but hardly more. She wasn't in any of the right clubs, didn't live either in West Rogers Park or on Lake Shore Drive, wasn't in my set or in any other that mattered. Besides, she was at Senn for only a year. We took first-year Latin together, but next fall she didn't return, having gone off, at fifteen, to the University of Chicago, which then—I'm speaking of the early 1950's—had a program for very bright high-school kids.

It was in the 1970's, two decades later, that my friend Norm Brodsky called to ask if I remembered a girl at Senn named Janet Burgess. I didn't. "Someone by that name," he said "has written a blistering attack on the school in the current issue of *Harper's*. And I think you may be in it. Or at least the flat back of your head and your magnificent ears."

Blistering was the word for it. The essay, a memoir really, was about the stifled and yet bizarre life of a sensitive young girl in the barbaric setting of a middle-class, predominantly Jewish high school. Witty assaults on teachers, students, and clubs were launched in an impressively deft way. A caustic paragraph was devoted to Miss Cobb's first-year Latin class, the author seated, staring, behind a curly-haired boy with stick-out ears within whose

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head, the author was certain, not a thing could possibly have been going on. That curly hair, those ears, that head with nothing going on in it: as Norm had rightly recognized, they were all mine.

Janet Burgess was of course Janet Natalsky. The biographical note said that she lived in Chicago and was "at work on a novel and a study about daily life in a psychiatric ward." As for me, the empty-headed boy now in his middle thirties, I, *mirabile dictu*, had in the interim become something resembling a literary scholar-critic. After a year at the University of Illinois at Navy Pier—Harvard on the rocks, we called it—where I proved my seriousness by getting all A's, my father agreed to pay my way to the University of Wisconsin. There I found I was even better at school than I thought. So I stayed at it, going on to Stanford for a Ph.D. in literature. Now I was a teacher myself, a recently tenured associate professor of English at the University of Illinois at Chicago, located no longer at Navy Pier but in a grim, gray concrete campus just west of the Loop and south of Greektown.

It was in this context that Janet re-entered my life later that same year, when she participated in a panel on "Fiction and the New Journalism" sponsored by our English department. I had a late-afternoon class to teach, but managed to slip in for the last quarter-hour. And there she was, unmistakably Janet, her red hair thicker than ever, her skin still slightly blotchy, her confidence in her election unchanged.

She sat very upright, leaning slightly forward, elbows on the table, which gave her a look of extreme alertness. The various panelists were in the process of summing up: Michael Anton, a hack journalist and unpublished novelist who had wormed his way into the department as a permanent visiting writer-in-residence; Bette Newboldt, our unappeasable feminist, whom, I'm fairly certain, God Himself could not have made happy; and Les Feinstein, the dean of Arts and Sciences, author of a book on Alexander Pope and a collection of his own forgettable verse.

Janet was the last to speak. Her manner immediately interested me, combining extreme common sense with deliberately dated clichés and loopy asides, the whole supported by unbending highbrow views. "We can, it seems to me," her peroration went, "argue this point till the cows come home, the bulls following ardently behind. But finally it seems to me that whether journalism, new or old, can ever attain to the status of high art is a question that calls for, indeed demands, throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Journalism remains journalism. Art, art. And the two do well never to meet."

After the question and answer session, during which she handled herself with equally magisterial hauteur, I walked up to her.

"Excuse me," I said, "but I wonder if you remember me?"

She gave me a quizzical smile. "No," she said, "I don't believe I do. Should I?"

I turned around. "The ears, Janet. Miss Cobb's Latin class."

"Oh, my God," she said, "David Nachman. It's really you."

"The man himself," I said. "Nachman comes before Natalsky, which is why I sat in front of you. If my name had been Noskin, my ears would never have appeared in *Harper's*. Are you free for coffee?"

"Sure," she said, smiling. "We can catch up on the bad old days."

"How did Natalsky become Burgess?" I asked as we sat in my small office, sipping coffee from cardboard cups.

"Ms. Janet Natalsky made the serious mistake of marrying a professor of chemistry at the University of Chicago named Ernest Burgess. Three years later he left me for a graduate student. This sounds common enough, I suppose, except that the student was an East Indian boy. I have to admit that it threw me, at least for a bit. I came away from the marriage with a shiny new Waspy name and what was diagnosed as a nervous breakdown."

"The breakdown accounts for your promised book on the psychiatric ward?"

"Some promise," she said. "It's been to eleven publishers with no takers. But fill me in a little on your own life."

I told her what little there was to tell: my dissertation on the writers of the British Empire, published by Yale, and my new book on the reputation of Rudyard Kipling, which had gotten me tenure; my marriage and my two daughters; my relative contentment with being left pretty much alone to teach my small classes and write my books at my own pace. "I never expected so quiet a life," I concluded.

She asked me about the kids we had gone to school with. I reported that I saw a few of them from time to time, and occasionally ran into others in restaurants or at Bulls or Cubs games or movies in the Old Orchard shopping center.

"I can't tell you how much I hated that school," she said. "I especially loathed the girls with their little upstanding boobs swaddled in cashmere

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sweaters and their certainty that the world was arranged for them alone. If I had to stay at Senn for four years, I think I might have taken my life. Which reminds me—I should be candid. I had more than a nervous breakdown after the honorable Professor Burgess left me for his Indian. I actually overdosed on sleeping pills."

"The break-up left you feeling lost?"

"Nothing of the kind," she said. "I was angry at myself for being so stupid, in so many ways. A person like me shouldn't really marry, you know. Marriage is not what I'm about."

I was going to ask her what she was about but she got there first. "I am an artist," she informed me, "and marriage is always a mistake for an artist, and also for the person the artist marries. I won't make that mistake again."

BEFORE LEAVING my office Janet told me she was living in a studio apartment on Dorchester in her old University of Chicago neighborhood. She spent a lot of time at writers' colonies, published the occasional article, wrote book reviews for the Chicago *Trib* and the *Sun-Times*, took in small honorariums for things like this afternoon's panel.

I couldn't quite get a fix on whether she was disdainful of what I did. Even as a young man, I don't think I kidded myself about it: I wrote books about people who wrote books, and taught students things that only a small number of them cared about. Still, I felt myself privileged. To be allowed to indulge my own passion for the writers I loved, at the price of having to teach six hours a week—as I used to say to my father, who spent the better part of his own life selling costume jewelry on the road, it sure beat working.

I drove Janet into the Loop, where she was going to catch a bus back to Hyde Park. We exchanged phone numbers, promised to get together for lunch. Neither of us did anything about it. But one day, a few months later, I found in my faculty mailbox a copy of a magazine called *Ploughshares*. It contained another memoir by Janet Burgess, "My Sister Was an Only Child," sent to me by the editors with the compliments of the author.

I'd never read anything quite like Janet's memoir. It was about her proletarian Jewish family, and it was devastating in its vividness and candor. Her father was a fix-it man, doing odd jobs for people; a brutish man, he never spoke, she claimed, in other than monosyllables or the briefest of sentences. Her mother, who weighed nearly 300 pounds, did the minimum of cooking and housekeeping, instead indulging her taste for pedicures and the contents of boxes of Whitman's Samplers. A younger sister, with rheumatic fever, used up what little attention was available in the family's dark one-bedroom apartment on Ainslie Street. Janet didn't mention herself until the very end of the memoir, where she spoke of listening to a radio program called *Mr. Keene, Tracer of Lost Persons*. She ended by saying that, with her books and her dreams of art, she always imagined herself as one of those lost persons, except that she wished never to be found.

Janet's parents were both still alive, I remembered her telling me in my office; I wondered what their response might be to this portrait. When I phoned to thank her for having a copy sent to me, we made a date for lunch on the following Wednesday. I picked her up at her apartment. She was running behind, and when I rang from downstairs she suggested that I come up for a minute. The door to her third-floor apartment was open; inside, the room was a shambles of stacked paperback books, magazines on the floor, dishes in the sink, an unmade single bed.

"Oh, hi, David," she said, emerging from the bathroom as if surprised to see me there. She was wearing a thick green sweater with a high turtleneck, a gray, slightly rumpled skirt, and saddle shoes. "Need to use the bathroom before we go?"

"Maybe I should," I said. The chaos was even greater there than in the living room: open jars and uncapped tubes and damp towels everywhere. I washed my hands, dried them on a rumpled towel over the tub, and as I grasped the door handle found my right hand wrapped in a pair of Janet's underpants. "Jesus, I'm in Janet Natalsky's drawers," I thought.

We ate at Salonika, a place on 57th Street. Janet ordered roast chicken, I a gyros sandwich. A lot of bulky Chicago cops were at other tables.

"Your memoir was a knockout," I said. "Really strong stuff."

"Thanks," she said. "It's part of an early-life autobiography I'm planning. The *Harper's* piece was another part of it."

"Have your parents or your sister seen any of this?"

"Not that I know of. My sister's married to a dentist and lives in West Rogers Park. My parents are still on Ainslie. None of them is exactly your typical *Ploughshares* reader."

"But what if it were to fall into their hands? What would happen?"

"I guess they'd learn what wretched parents they were. Besides, you know, David, I'm a writer, and I

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have only my life to write about. If it hurts them, it'll hurt them. It really can't be helped."

After lunch I walked her back to her building. At the entrance, she told me she was planning to move next month to Santa Fe; she didn't yet have an address, but she hoped we'd stay in touch. I wondered if she'd offer me a cheek to kiss as we parted but instead she put out her hand. "If you need me for anything," I said, rather foolishly—what could she need me for?—"you can always reach me at the university."

It was a warm afternoon, and I decided to walk over to O'Gara's used bookstore in hopes of finding a few H.G. Wells items I'd been looking for. On the surface, Hyde Park appeared to be just another Chicago neighborhood, maybe a little more varied in its architecture—fewer bungalows, almost no two-flats—but the spirit of the place was conferred by the abundance of graduate students and the many hangers-on who, long after departing the university, remained in this enclave in a state of suspended studenthood. To the north and to the south were tough, slummy neighborhoods, but here in Hyde Park all was books and foreign newspapers and older European professors, Hitler's gift to America, walking around in berets and goatees. Hyde Park seemed a good place for high-IQ misfits, blessed with dazzling minds or imaginations but unequipped to take life straight on; a good place for Janet, I thought.

Three years must have gone by before I heard from her again, and then not directly but through the Guggenheim Foundation. She had put my name down as a reference. Her fellowship proposal was for a study of novelists who took Chicago as their subject, among them Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, James T. Farrell, Richard Wright, Nelson Algren, and Saul Bellow. As a practicing writer rather than an academic, she claimed that she was in a superior position to understand what it was about the city that attracted these men, not all of whom had been born there.

When the annual list of Guggenheim winners was published, Janet's name was on it. But whether she returned to Chicago to work on the project I have no idea, for I never had a word from her. Then, some four years after her Guggenheim ran out, she phoned me from San Francisco.

"Oh, David, hi, Janet Burgess." Again I noted her odd tic of beginning every conversation as if she were surprised to see or hear from me, even when the idea had been hers in the first place. After some pleasantries she said she had a favor to ask.

"Sure," I said, "what can I do for you?"

"Oh," she said, "I've applied for a Newberry fellowship to work on my Chicago novelists project, and I wonder if I can ask you for another recommendation."

"Of course," I said. "I'd be happy to supply it. How's it going, by the way? Making much progress?"

"I don't want to make too much progress," she said. "This little item happens to be my cash cow just now, and I expect to stay with it until all udders are utterly dry. Udders, utterly, what a language we've been given to work with."

"Cash cow?"

"Yes," she said, "I've already had three different fellowships with it. The way I've written my proposal seems to ring the bell with foundation people. And the money gives me time to attend to my own writing. I'm not really a critic, as you know."

I let pass what I heard as a touch of contempt directed at the human species to which I happened to belong. "But how's your work going in general?"

"Not too badly," she said. "My memoir is making the rounds of publishers. And I'm also living fairly well on kill fees from magazines that decide not to use articles they've commissioned from me. I've had some quite decent ones, from the *Atlantic*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and an especially fat one from the *New Yorker*. No business like lit business, you know."

We agreed to meet for lunch or dinner the next time she was in Chicago, the chances of which, she said, would of course be much increased if she got her Newberry fellowship. She did in fact win it, though she never called to tell me so. Evidently, she did not feel under the normal constraints of politeness—she was, after all, an artist, with better things to do. But perhaps, I was belatedly starting to think, Janet was also something of an operator.

By then I had been made a full professor and had joined the publication committee of our university press. This enterprise was a good deal less than first-class. It published lots of stuff about Chicago and Illinois politics, and had recently initiated a program to bring regional writers back into print. The newest activity was putting out the work of contemporary poets; the director of this project, Regis Gambon, was the school's head of creative writing.

I had had little to do with Regis Gambon. Behind his back, other people in the department called him "old soft G," after the way he insisted his name be pronounced. He was said to be from Alabama. Now in his early fifties, Gambon was a

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wide man who looked extremely well-fed without being quite fat. His dark hair was ambitiously coifed—I believe he had a permanent—with curls forming bangs that fell over his forehead. A thick mustache covered his upper lip in what the boys at Senn High School would have called a womb broom. The overall effect—soft G, curly bangs, womb broom—was preposterous.

Gambon did not let the fact that he was married with four young children get in the way of a well-earned reputation for sleeping with undergraduates. As for his own poetry, a glance at his most recent book, on display in our department faculty lounge, revealed strong stands against Ronald Reagan, war, and materialism. One poem ended, "Each of us must as best he can/Stem the senseless hatred of man for man." I remember reading this and thinking that if Gambon were to try sleeping with one of my daughters, both of whom were now in high school, I'd be delighted to show him a fine specimen of the senseless hatred of man for man.

I MENTION Regis Gambon only because, at our faculty Christmas party, he showed up with Janet Natalsky on his arm. I spotted them at the other end of the room, looking like more than just friends. The spectacle, somehow, saddened me; I felt that Janet was—how to say it—sleeping below herself. What did she need from a clown like Gambon?

"Oh, hi, David," she said, when I came up to her. "You must know Regis Gambon."

"We don't know each other as well as colleagues should," Gambon said, putting out a paw for me to shake. It seemed unusually padded, more like a well broken-in catcher's mitt than a human hand.

"Regis is arranging a stint for me in the creative-writing program, David. Wouldn't it be lovely if we were to be on the same faculty? David and I went to the same high school," she said, turning to Gambon.

"It must have been a high-powered intellectual institution," he said.

"Quite the reverse," I said, "as Janet will be the first to tell you."

He wandered off, and I asked Janet how she had come to know him. They were on the same circuit, she said. They had first met at Breadloaf, and then a few years ago they both ended up at the McDowell writer's colony.

"He has a reputation," I said, getting as much irony into my voice as was seemly, "as a hands-on teacher."

"I'd say he's a hands-on guy in every way," she said, with a knowing smile. Did she also know he was a creep? Did I know her well enough to say so? I decided not to.

"Do you really want the job here?"

"As always, I can use the money."

"Is there anything I can do to help?"

"I don't think so," she said. "Leave it to Regis." She paused for a beat. "Sounds like *Leave It to Beaver*, doesn't it? Anyhow I always say that where there's a way there's a will. What do you always say?"

"I always say getting what you want isn't the same as wanting what you get. Or did Lewis Carroll always say that. I think he may have."

I asked the department secretary, a genteel Southern woman named Estelle Frye, for the paperwork on Gambon's nomination of Janet Burgess. It included some awestruck recommendations from writers I had never heard of. Gambon's own statement was also there, along with six samples of Janet's writing: the *Harper's* and *Ploughshares* memoirs, short stories from *Prairie Schooner*, *Antioch Review*, and *Georgia Review*, and a longish poem about the death of her father from *Threepenny Review*.

None of the stories, I thought, came alive in the way the memoirs did. Sentence by sentence, the writing was no less amazing—astounding, really, in its virtuosity; but the characters didn't breathe, the situations were implausible, everything seemed willed and dead on the page. Janet, I concluded, had only one story to tell, and in telling it she was at her best when beating up on someone else. Hers was a purely destructive talent. But genuine: on the right subject, she possessed the magic of art.

Sure enough, Janet got the job, which ran for two semesters. She taught Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, I on Tuesdays and Thursdays. As a visiting writer she wasn't required to attend department meetings and, sensibly, did not. We never once saw each other during the entire school year. I put a note in her mailbox suggesting lunch; she replied, "Love to"; but when I suggested she name a day, I never heard back, and lost all contact with her.

Then, a few years later, I saw her name above an impressive short piece on the death of James T. Farrell. It had appeared in the *Threepenny Review*, a copy of which was lying on the table in the faculty lounge. The author's bio said that Janet was living in Taos and had just published a novel, *The Avatar's Revenge*, with an academic press. A few years later still, she had a coruscating article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* about the perils, for a writer, of teaching creative writing; the biographical note had her living in College Park, Maryland, and made

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mention of a forthcoming book of essays to be published by Greywolf Press.

Several more years went by. My own children had grown up, gone off to college, married. My biography of Joseph Conrad had met with a good critical reception, and I now found myself in a chair at Northwestern, having turned down offers from Berkeley and Yale. I was working on a collection of Kipling's letters for Oxford. Now, in my middle fifties, I had pretty much done what I set out to do, and was reaping the small but pleasant rewards of a successful academic career. Ahead of me I had only years and, with luck, grandchildren.

Just before ten o'clock one night—my wife and I were already in bed, reading, about to turn out the lights—the phone rang.

"Oh, hi, David, it's me, Janet, Janet Burgess. Hope I'm not calling too late."

"No," I said. "How are you?"

"'As well as can be expected' is the way I now answer that question," she said. "The reason I'm calling is that I'm in town for my brother-in-law's funeral, and I wonder if you'd like to meet for lunch, like maybe tomorrow? The funeral's on Thursday and I'm leaving Friday." She added that she was now living in the Northwest. Oregon? Washington? Vague as always, she didn't say.

"Sure," I said. "I don't teach on Wednesdays. Tomorrow will be fine."

She was staying with her sister in West Rogers Park. She didn't have a car—didn't know how to drive—so I picked her up there on Fargo, a block west of California. It was one of those gray Chicago days, temperature in the twenties, lots of black ice on the road. All the local restaurants I'd known as a boy—Randall's, Robert's, Friedman's, Kofield's—were gone, so I drove us into Evanston and stopped at the Golden Olympic on Chicago Avenue.

"Ah," said Janet, "a Grecian spoon." Once seated, she announced her liking of the statement on the menu; under the name Golden Olympic ran the slogan, quotation marks and all, "A Family Restaurant with Just a Hint of Greece."

"Nothing like being both tone deaf and dead to the menace that lurks in language," she said, smiling.

Sitting across from Janet, I saw, as I hadn't during the ride, that the years had not been easy on her. She was wearing a heavy black cable-stitch sweater, a tweed skirt, and argyle socks that came up over the knee. Her hair, thick as ever, was now all gray, running into white. Her face had more than the usual wrinkles and pouchiness for someone our age, and she looked permanently tired. She wore very little makeup: no attempts at disguise.

"Condolences, by the way, on the death of your brother-in-law," I said, after we had ordered our lunches, a turkey club with a Coke for her, for me an egg-white Denver omelet and tea.

"Condolences are very much by-the-way," she said. "He meant absolutely nothing to me. He was a very dull man, so dull that I'm not sure how the paramedics knew he was dead, unless they sensed the relief on the faces of his wife and children. He was a dentist, and a good money-maker, I'll give him that. My little sister, poor baby, married a professional man. Made my mother very happy."

"And how go things with you?"

"Oh, all right, I suppose. I have two manuscripts—one of three connected novellas, the other of poems—neither of which has found a publisher. The royalties from my last book, I hate to tell you, might pay for this lunch, but there wouldn't be enough left over for a tip."

"As far as I can see, you write exactly what you want. I admire that," I said, trying to find some way to give the conversation an upward tilt.

"Do you?" she said. "I notice that Scribner's brought out your biography of Conrad. I'd kill to have such a publishing house for one of my books, getting me out of the small-audience ghetto—make that minuscule-audience."

"You do eventually find publishers, though. I'm sure you will again."

"David, I am fifty-five years old. I have published three books. If I were a man in this position, I would have lots of young girls, students no doubt, fluttering around me, dragging me into bed. As a middle-aged woman, I don't see any men, young or old, doing anything like that."

That eliminated any personal questions I might have had along those lines. We had both taken detours, Janet and I, from the prosperous lives we might have lived. But how much safer mine was: a life of more than reasonable security, a pension waiting at the end. She, on the other hand, had been flying without a net from the beginning. She had her ambition and her talent, and the two did not match, though she could not have known this when she began betting everything on the latter. Did she, I wondered, realize that she had lost the bet?

We made it through the remainder of lunch talking about things of no real interest to either of us. Arriving back at her sister's, I walked her up the ice-coated steps. Janet took my arm. For a coat, she was wearing what in those days was called a fun fur, a great mottled shaggy piece of business, perhaps borrowed from her sister. At the top of

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the stairs she said, "Well, David, thanks for lunch and everything else," and then leaned in and embraced me. Her thick hair, her heavy sweater, the shaggy fur—for a nanosecond I feared I would never emerge. Her sister opened the door. "Bye, David," she said, and without introducing me walked into the house.

Driving home to Evanston I felt an overwhelming sadness. Janet and I were contemporaries, damnit, and we were both getting to an age where there wasn't much in the way of turn-around time. She had set out to be a hero of culture and ended a martyr of art. Did what I'd accomplished add up to anything more, or was I merely lucky not to have been infected by the virus of real talent?

ANOTHER TEN years passed. I had retired from my teaching job at Northwestern and was working on a biography of Kipling when my 50th high-school reunion came along. I dithered. Fifty years, good God. The days and weeks and months and years seemed to run at the same old pace; it was only the decades that flew by. I had lost a lot of hair, put on some weight. But my wife told me I ought to go, and so I sent in my check, noting my so-called accomplishments on the fact sheet that came with the invitation. I didn't much look forward to it.

We gathered in a dimly lit Italian restaurant in the Loop, famous for its large portions of food. Perhaps 300 people were in the room. Someone had brought an old record player and lots of 45's: heavy-breathing, over-dramatized numbers sung by Italian men and women who wanted to be loved with inspiration, invited you to make yourself comfortable, and worried that the teacher might be standing much too near, my love.

At such events, you can either mill around or stand still and wait for others to come to you. I decided to stand still. From old schoolmates who wandered over, I was somewhat surprised to learn that I was considered one of the successes of our class. Many had made much more money, but I had something resembling a public life. The fact that I wrote books and, more crucially, had taught at Northwestern seemed to count for something. I speculated that it was because, when we were kids, Northwestern had had a strict 13-percent quota on Jews and Catholics.

After a few never quite satisfying conversations we sat down to a heavy southern-Italian meal: the works, from minestrone to spumoni. As dessert and coffee were being served, our class president, a nice guy named, then as now, Buzzy Lerner, spoke in an agreeable way about how lucky we were to have come of age at the time we did.

When he had finished, he invited others to come up as the spirit moved them. Betsy Collins, a once devastatingly cute cheerleader, herself now devastated by the trials of aging, took the microphone to say what a privilege it was to have gone to Senn and how much she appreciated all the teachers, ending, after a few more platitudes, with "I love all you guys." A heavyset guy wearing an obvious toupee announced that he was Irwin Goodman and that to this day he had never forgotten the advice given him by Ed Dow, our football coach: "Never go into a game thinking you're going to lose." Since our football team almost invariably lost, it wasn't clear how this applied to anything, but tonight, clearly, was not an occasion for close reading.

Then a tallish woman with thick white hair and very little makeup, dressed much less expensively than most of the others in the room, took the mike. No one else seemed to recognize her. "Please, Janet," I thought, "don't tell them off for being smug and stupid and middle-class."

"Oh, hi," she began. "My name's Janet Burgess, originally Janet Natalsky, and I attended Senn for just my freshman year, so I wouldn't be in the least surprised if no one here remembers me. In fact, I'd be amazed to learn how anyone got my address to invite me to this shebang. Anyhow, after my year at Senn I went off to the University of Chicago, which may have been the best or worst thing that ever happened to me. I became a writer, and I've published five books, though I've written quite a few more, and I seriously doubt anyone here has read any of them. But that's all right. No hard feelings.

"The reason I've got this microphone in my hand is that many years ago I published an article in *Harper's* attacking the school and just about everyone in it. In that article I took no prisoners. I wrote that you were all a bunch of hopeless idiots, utter conformists, absolutely clueless about what is important in life.

"By the time I wrote my article I was pretty certain I knew what was important, and I can tell you what it was in one word: art. Art was important. I wanted to become a writer, and a writer is what I am, however unappreciated my work may be. If I've earned $10,000 from my writing over the last forty years, I'd be surprised. I had a brief bad marriage and no children. If it weren't for art, today I might be living comfortably in Highland Park and worrying about whether my granddaughter Peyton

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is going to get into Brown and praying before I fall asleep that her brother Tyler isn't gay.

"But as I look around this room, as I see how little all of you seem to have changed, how pleased you are with what you are, I don't feel so bad. Art—I gave everything up for art, goddamn fucking art. But that's O.K. I did the right thing, the only thing, and if I ever doubted it, I sure don't now."

Only at this point did it occur to me that Janet was drunk. Nobody in the room seemed to have a clue about what was going on. Buzzy Lerner, standing off to the side, appeared stricken. Who was this woman, and why is she telling us these things? This was supposed to be an evening devoted to golden memories, uncomplicated fun.

I couldn't let her continue. Getting up, I nodded to Buzzy, slipped an arm around her, tried to take the mike.

"Oh, hi, David," she said. "Hey, everybody, it's brave Dr. Nachman, tenured and tonsured as he now is." She patted the bald spot on the back of my head. "I'll bet he's going to tell me to read two chapters of Henry James and get right into bed." She hiccupped and slumped backward into my arms.

Holding firm, I steered her to my chair. Norm Brodsky helped me get her to her apartment in an exhausted-looked building on Greenleaf off Sheridan Road. I walked her up the stairs, opened the door with her key. Still tipsy, she said, grinning, "I hope you don't expect to be kissed, sir. This is, after all, our first date."

It was nearly two years after this that I saw Janet from my car and drove on without stopping to offer her a ride. She did not need me, I decided; there was nothing I could ever hope to do for her. Who knows? On that sunny afternoon she may have been thinking up a story, something about a boring academic who had thrown away his life composing dry-as-dust books about men more talented and courageous than he. Someone, I would not be in the least surprised to learn, with large and fleshy ears.

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Observations

A Korean Solution?

Arthur Waldron

No one can doubt that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea ("North Korea") has been, for the half-century of its existence, one of the handful of the most horrible regimes in all of human history. Its people have been brainwashed, worked to death on pointless and grandiose projects, intentionally starved, tortured, and murdered, in ways every bit as wicked as were ever contemplated by Hitler or Stalin or Mao. Meanwhile, its rulers, first Kim Il Sung and now his son Kim Jong Il, have enjoyed worship, absolute authority, and lives of indescribable luxury. Today this regime is kept afloat almost entirely by massive foreign aid. To judge by the condition of its people (and its rulers), North Korea is in nearly every respect a failed state.

It would be gratifying if the powerful focus on North Korea over the past decade, not least by the United States, were driven by revulsion at the terrible evil being perpetrated by this murderous tyranny. But that is untrue. In fact, North Korea now stands in the international spotlight not because of its manifold crimes and failures but because of three real and remarkable technical successes.

The first is the development by Pyongyang of ballistic-missile technology, to the point where its latest weapons, while crude by comparison with China's, for example, are nonetheless capable of hitting much of Asia and probably soon the western United States, and are in demand on international markets. The second is the building by North Korea of workable nuclear weapons that use plutonium, weapons that now number perhaps between a half-dozen and a dozen or more. The third has been the development by Kim Jong Il's regime of a second bomb-making system using highly-enriched uranium—and doing so undetected, at a time when North Korea was thought to have definitively forsworn all nuclear programs and to be under the effective international surveillance of the Clinton administration's "Agreed Framework" of 1994.

The gradual emergence of North Korea as a nuclear power has elicited much posturing and laying down of markers, above all by the United States. In November 1993, President Clinton stated that "North Korea cannot be allowed to develop a nuclear bomb." Ten years later, by which time North Korea probably already possessed a small nuclear arsenal, President George W. Bush stated: "We will not tolerate nuclear weapons in North Korea. . . . We will not give in to blackmail. . . . We will not settle for anything less than the complete, verifiable, and irreversible elimination of North Korea's nuclear-weapons program." Two years later, in May of this year, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice added an implicit threat of military action, declaring that "if the North does not [give up its nuclear program], then of course we'll have to look at other options."

In spite of the hard words, North Korea is, and will almost certainly remain, a nuclear power. More important even than the implications of this fact for Asia is the probability of North Korea's becoming a

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model for many other would-be nuclear states, showing them how to achieve their aims even in the face of almost universal global condemnation.

JASPER BECKER, an Englishman, is one of East Asia's longest-serving and best-respected foreign correspondents, first with the BBC and then as Beijing bureau chief of the once-great Hong Kong daily, the *South China Morning Post*. His firing from that newspaper in 2003, clearly on political grounds, was an accurate foretaste of what was to become of the freedoms Beijing had promised to the former British colony.

It was also a tribute to his fearlessness and skill as a writer. In his first book, *Mongolia: The Lost Country* (1992), Becker had revealed the horrors and human cost (amounting to perhaps 10 percent of the population) exacted by the Soviet Communists in the former Mongolian People's Republic. In his second and probably best known book, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine* (1996), he chronicled the catastrophic man-made famine that cost China perhaps 30 million dead after the Great Leap Forward of the 1950's.

Rogue Regime: Kim Jong Il and the Looming Threat of North Korea, Becker's authoritative new book,* is what one would expect from such a writer: a thoroughly documented, all-around account. In its pages we learn about Becker's clandestine meetings in northeast China with wretched refugees fleeing the awful hunger and cruelty of their homeland, whose inhabitants are so malnourished as to weigh, on average, half as much as their South Korean relatives and to be eight inches shorter; about the acts of terror, like the 1983 bombing in Burma that killed seventeen senior South Korean officials, narrowly missing the president, that are part and parcel of the regime's repertoire; and about the utter collapse of the economy, now largely dependent upon China and international relief organizations as well as on criminal activities.

If any state can be called totalitarian, it is North Korea. Becker gives a chilling account of how Kim Il Sung created and Kim Jong Il has maintained a regime of terror, indoctrination, and leader-worship that is without parallel since the deaths of Stalin and Mao and is today the envy of other East Asian despots. Reportedly, China's president Hu Jintao told a party meeting that although China was an economic success, North Korea was *the* model for politics and ideology.

When he comes to North Korea's nuclear-weapons program, Becker departs somewhat from his usual approach. In a preface to this book, he allows himself to imagine a U.S. and South Korean military strike aimed at destroying Pyongyang's weapons, only to leave us hanging in suspense as, in retaliation, North Korea successfully fires a long-range Taepo Dong 2 missile almost certainly carrying a nuclear warhead. Returning to the subject in the book's conclusion, he speculates about how the international community ought to deal with North Korea's development of nuclear weapons.

In between, in a chapter titled "Nuclear Warlord," Becker provides as clear and as comprehensive an account as one could desire of just how Pyongyang succeeded in going nuclear.

JAPAN HAD begun a nuclear program in Korea when it still controlled the whole territory in 1945. After the partition of the peninsula, the North Korean regime opened its first nuclear research center, with Soviet aid, perhaps as early as 1952; about four years later, hundreds of its scientists headed for study at the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in Dubna, near Moscow. In 1959, Moscow supplied a two-megawatt research reactor, and work began at Yongbyon, still the best-known North Korean nuclear site.

Communist China detonated its first nuclear weapon in 1964. Kim Il Sung, his approaches to Beijing having been rebuffed, again turned to Moscow, which supplied a second reactor along with plutonium-reprocessing technology. In 1984, Kim obtained Soviet agreement to deliver four 440-megawatt light-water reactors, and took personal control of an accelerated, all-out effort to develop nuclear weapons. In 1989, satellite photographs showed North Korea secretly unloading sufficient plutonium-bearing fuel rods at Yongbyon for one or two bombs. Thereafter, evidence has only mounted, and so has international concern.

Becker tells us about Kenki Aoyama, born in 1961 to Japanese parents and involved in North Korea's weapons program before escaping:

> [I]n 1997, when [Aoyama] was working as an industrial spy in Beijing, he met an old friend, a North Korean nuclear scientist. The man looked terrible, thin and wan. His eyebrows had disappeared from accidental radiation and Aoyama asked him: "Are you still working on it?"—"No," came the reply. "It's done. We succeeded."

We have no reason to doubt the veracity of these words.

NOW THE problem for the rest of the world is what, if anything, should be done about the situation. In my view, we must start by facing reality—namely, the unwelcome fact that North Korea is now, and will remain, a nuclear power. The complex negotiations that the Clinton administration concluded in 1994 with the help of former President Jimmy Carter traded U.S. aid and construction of power reactors for the abandonment of Pyongyang's nuclear program. This turned out to be no more than a long breather, during which North Korea proba-

* Oxford, 300 pp., $28.00.

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bly completed its plutonium-based work and developed its highly enriched uranium pathway.

Some still speak as if a diplomatic option existed by which North Korea could gain international recognition, be given aid and security assurances, and in return, with some pressure from Beijing, agree to give up its program. But the lesson of the 1994 Agreed Framework is that Pyongyang will take whatever we offer but will not give up its weapons. And the lesson of President Bush's exemplary multilateralism in the six-party talks that have been conducted since 2003 is that no one, not even China, can unmake Korean nuclear military power. The administration hoped that a friendly China might discipline a recalcitrant Pyongyang, but China is not friendly and Pyongyang cannot easily be disciplined. It is therefore time to give up the China-bells-the-cat fantasy.

Nor does Becker, in his afterword, present any ideas that promise greater success. He criticizes those who favor "engaging" Kim Jong Il diplomatically and economically, for they help keep in power an unspeakable tyranny. He has little use for the "line of complacent thinking" that sees as inevitable the replacement of the North's totalitarian regime with a working democracy. In his tough concluding paragraphs, he talks instead about "the need for new international rules" for defining North Korea as a "rogue state" and cutting it off from Chinese support while also making Kim Jong Il "personally accountable at an international tribunal or the International Court of Justice." At the very end he speaks of putting a limit on "the length of time a state can breach or abuse the Non-Proliferation Treaty without provoking war or military reprisals." But he leaves the last four words unelaborated.

Does the evident impossibility of peaceful elimination of the North Korean nuclear program mean recourse to the "other options" to which Secretary Rice referred? These would presumably be military—but I believe they, too, are delusory.

Consider the city of New York. Given adequate warning time, would it be possible to conceal there nuclear bombs, missiles and production facilities, hiding them so effectively that even an occupying army would have difficulty finding them? The answer is surely yes. North Korea is perfectly capable of the same sort of concealment. It has an area of 47,399 square miles, much of it mountainous. Pyongyang has had a good dozen years' advance warning, thanks to which its nuclear sites have been dispersed and rendered invisible. We do not know where its networks of factories, laboratories, and mines are, but—as in the old Soviet Union—they are buried deep underground, far beyond the reach of either foreign intelligence or any sort of attack.

IF THERE is no diplomatic solution, and no military solution, what then? No one can dispute what Becker demonstrates: that North Korea has committed crimes against its own people, and against humanity, of unspeakable wickedness and cruelty. If this were a just world, all the nations would long since have risen up as one and put an end to these horrors. But this is not a just world, and the UN and the International Court of Justice are not going to make it one. Nor is the United States.

What flows from this is a strategic conclusion: the overriding interest of the United States is that the new nuclear Korea, which is here to stay, should be closer to us and to our allies than to our adversaries. On the face of it, this may sound as fanciful a prospect as actually disarming the North Koreans. But new realities call for new thinking, and recent history has given us ample cause to question the permanence of seemingly immovable arrangements.

In my judgment, our best hope for North Korea is South Korea. Although the two have lived under separate regimes for six decades, before then they were one—the stable and undivided state of Choson, also known as the Yi dynasty—for more than 500 years, until the Japanese annexed the country in 1910. Korean unity has a real historical and cultural basis, every bit as real as the unity of the two Germanies, and there is reason to believe that opinion on both sides of the 38th parallel wishes it to come to pass sooner rather than later.

Neighboring countries fear this development, with reason. A united Korea would be as big as the former West Germany, would occupy a crucial strategic position—and would itself almost certainly be a nuclear power. (South Korea began to develop nuclear weapons decades ago, only to be stopped by the United States.) But if, for argument's sake, such unification were to preserve South Korea's democracy and extend it northward, the resulting state need not be any more frightening than, say, China already is. And if the United States and the democratic countries of the region were to support this unification, working always through and with South Korea, then the chances of things going well would be greatly improved.

It might be immediately objected that a nuclear Korea would inevitably mean a nuclear Japan. But that is a likely outcome in any case, given that North Korea already has nuclear weapons and will not give them up, and that the U.S. and Japan have no answer to the threat these weapons pose. Besides, is a nuclear Japan any more dangerous than a nuclear France or England? Not to mention a nuclear Pakistan or China?

The more difficult issue would be to keep a new Korea closer to Japan and to us than to China. In particular, Japan and Korea share a bitter and bloody past, flowing not least from Japan's cruel colonial oc-

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cupation of the peninsula. But China's inveterate ham-handedness may help convince the highly nationalistic Koreans to keep their distance from Beijing. China, for instance, has recently completed "archaeological research" proving that northern Korea's ancient Goguryo civilization was in fact "Chinese"—a classic example of preparing spurious historical justification for invasion or annexation.

I DO not mean to suggest that the pathways to realizing this script are obvious, or that the script itself, whose premise is that nuclear proliferation has happened and will continue, remains other than very worrying. As Becker's fine book brings home, North Korea is the model, and has shown us the stages that we may soon be going through in the case of other countries: fear as a nuclear program is discovered; greater fear as it is found to be more advanced than anticipated; tough words from world leaders, combined with empty threats; playing for time and trips down diplomatic blind alleys; recognition of the lack of diplomatic or military options; successful nuclearization nevertheless—and then the maddening dilemma of what to do with the world's next nuclear power.

Now that Pyonyang has released the movie, we may expect many remakes, or attempted remakes. Unless we somehow close down the studios beforehand—and North Korea suggests how nearly impossible that is to do—the fundamental plot will remain the same, even as the casts speak different languages.

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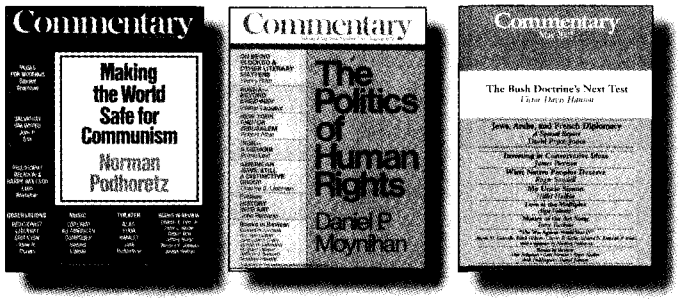

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OBSERVATIONS

Jews for Jesus—and Vice Versa

Hillel Halkin

IMAGINE THE following: it is the year 150 C.E. or thereabouts. After a prolonged conflict within the Jewish community of Palestine and its many offshoots around the Mediterranean, the believers in Jesus have triumphed. Mainstream Judaism, even while continuing to develop along the rabbinic lines that were already well-established in Jesus' time, has accepted the contention that he was sent by God to redeem the world and will return in glory to complete the task in the fullness of time. Meanwhile, however, the Jewish people adheres to its separate ways, insisting on the strict distinction between Jew and Gentile, sacred and profane, ritually permitted and ritually forbidden—even though it believes that the messiah has come in the person of a carpenter's son from Nazareth who was crucified by the Romans.

So much for the Jews. But what would have happened, in such an eventuality, to the non-Jews? This question is asked by the author and columnist David Klinghoffer in his newly published *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus**—a book that seeks to justify Judaism's dismissal of the Christian savior while arguing at the same time that the world should be grateful for that dismissal.

Klinghoffer does this by means of a historical hypothesis. Had Judaism accepted Jesus' messianic claims, he contends, Christianity would never have arisen. The pagan society of the era would not have been attracted to a redeemer who could only be acknowledged by becoming a Jew. Paganism would have remained the dominant religion of the Roman Empire—at least until Islam, another child of Judaism, brought monotheism to Europe at sword point, overrunning a continent whose decadent civilization would have been unable to resist its onslaught.

In that case, Klinghoffer argues, there would have been no Catholic Church, no Chartres or Notre Dame, no Sorbonne or Oxford, no Thomas Aquinas, Dante, or Michelangelo, no Renaissance, no Shakespeare or Newton, no Western science, art, literature, music, or democracy. There might have been great mosques in London and great schools of Arabic learning in Paris, but, today, life in those cities might well resemble medieval life in Cairo and Baghdad. This is why, Klinghoffer writes, "the Jewish rejection of Jesus was the founding act of Western civilization."

As A historical defense of Judaism, this is, one might say, having one's cake and eating it, too. On the one hand, Klinghoffer maintains, Jesus' Jewish contemporaries had every reason to scoff at his pretensions, since he did not live up to their minimal criteria for what a messiah was supposed to be or do—which was first and foremost to liberate the land and people of Israel from foreign oppression. Even if he actually performed all the wonders attributed to him by his followers, he failed to meet Judaism's evidentiary standards.

But on the other hand, Klinghoffer writes, because Jesus was a loyal Jew whose teachings, on the whole and despite certain differences of emphasis, were consistent with Jew-

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* Doubleday, 256 pp., $24.95.

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ish tradition, their dissemination among non-Jews meant the spread of Jewish beliefs and values throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. While Christianity broke permanently with Judaism under the influence of Paul (on whom Klinghoffer is harsh, going so far as to suggest that he faked his Jewish credentials), the conceptual gap between the two religions was never as great as later Christian and Jewish polemicists made it out to be. Indeed, many of the Christian doctrines that have seemed most outlandish to Jews, such as the divinity of Jesus or the saving power of faith, have Jewish roots.

Klinghoffer is quick to admit that this is hardly a novel way of viewing the Christian-Jewish relationship. It is, in fact, the point of view of Christianity itself, which always considered Judaism to be a parent whose limitations it had cast off and whose promise it fulfilled. Nor, as he points out in an interesting chapter of *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*, is the notion of Christianity as an extension of Judaism, rather than a falsification of it, totally foreign to Jewish sources. Hinted at in Yehuda Halevi's 12th-century philosophical book *Kuzari*, the idea was more fully developed somewhat later by Maimonides, who declared that Jesus of Nazareth, though obviously not the messiah, "served to clear the way for the king messiah [and] to prepare the whole world to worship God with one accord." In subsequent ages, too, there were rabbis who conceived of Christianity not as the enemy of Judaism but as a diluted version of it, a monotheistic burden light enough to be borne by the masses until they were ready for the heavier yoke of the Torah.

Moreover, there is yet another strand of Western thought that stresses the closeness of the two religions—while being hostile to them both. This started with Enlightenment intellectuals like Voltaire and Gibbon; took an anti-Enlightenment turn in Nietzsche (who had a grudging admiration for Judaism that he never accorded Christianity); was adopted by the ideology of the Nazis; and remains perceptible not only among doctrinaire secularists but in some of the New Age philosophies of our times. That the proverbial Martian observer descending to earth might initially have trouble in telling Judaism and Christianity apart, as did the 1st-century Romans, is thus an intellectual commonplace.

IN ARTICULATELY restating this commonplace in *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*, Klinghoffer seeks to explain why it is important for contemporary Jews and Christians to internalize it. Rather than thinking of their respective faiths as related but rival systems, he believes that the time has come for them to realize they are in the same boat; whatever their doctrinal differences, they are engaged in promoting the same truths, defending the same values, and worshiping the same God. Himself an observant Jew who came to Jewish practice as an adult, he concludes with a metaphor, borrowed from the 19th-century Italian rabbi Elijah Benamozegh, that reflects, as he puts it, "God's perspective":

> Being a "kingdom of priests" [as the Bible commands Israel to be] means ministering to others in a priestly role, for who can claim to be a priest if he has no congregation? God's instruction to the Jews at the moment of the revelation of the Torah was to serve the congregation of humanity, bringing the knowledge of the Lord to them. It would seem that the Christian church now plays the role of congregation . . . with the Jews serving in the ministerial position. Christians and Muslims alike know of the God of Abraham only because they met him in the Bible. . . . It served God's purposes that there be a unique religion [Christianity], acknowledging Him, for the people who spread out from Europe. It was not Judaism. It departs from Judaism in many ways. But in revering the God of Israel it contains the seeds for an ultimate reunification of the people [of the earth] in God's service.

Of course, judged in the context of today's ecumenism, there is nothing particularly remarkable about such a profession, either. Klinghoffer's way of putting the point may violate the "politically correct" norms of interfaith dialogue by naming Judaism as the senior partner in a spiritual coalition in which it plays the more demanding role, but Christian ecumenicists tend to do the same in reverse, depicting Christianity as a pivotal revolution in human development and Judaism as the "old regime" that legitimately but conservatively chose to stay behind. The existence of a "Judeo-Christian" tradition that deserves to be promoted by interfaith cooperation has been a cliché of American life for decades.

What is new, then, is not so much what Klinghoffer is saying as how and to whom he is saying it. In the past, ecumenism in America has been the province of the more "progressive" sectors of the Jewish and Christian communities; these have made the case for it in terms of their liberal social agendas, for which they have cited religious sanction. And because they have generally taken political and social issues more seriously than theological ones, it has been relatively easy for them to find common ground. Those not represented by them—Orthodox Jews, conservative Catholics, evangelical Protestants—have been excluded from interfaith conversation as much by its subject matter as by their inward-looking perspective, which sees religious truth as exclusively in their own possession.

It is these latter groups that Klinghoffer, a political conservative, is now primarily addressing. To fundamentalist Christians, he has sought to explain why Jews who be-

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lieve, like evangelicals, that the "Old Testament" is literally God's word have had good reason to cling to Judaism; to fundamentalist Jews, why Christianity, seen from their standpoint, should be viewed in a positive light. He has made an appeal for ecumenism to the least ecumenically disposed.

HERE, TOO, he is not a sole trailblazer. A handful of other Orthodox Jewish intellectuals have, in recent years, explored the same path. One thinks of figures like Michael Wyschogrod,* who has made the case for Christianity being less theologically alien to Jewish tradition than is commonly assumed, or Irving Greenberg,† who has called for viewing Christianity as a parallel track along which the God of Israel chose to reveal Himself to mankind. Greenberg has coined the term "covenantal pluralism" for his approach, according to which a Jew can hold that Mosaic law remains binding while also acknowledging that "it was God's purpose that the stalk of Abraham be grafted onto the root of the Gentiles" in the form of a new religion that, though springing from "the bosom of Judaism and profoundly marked by Jewish interpretation," had to "take on the coloration of the people that it reach[ed]."

Neither Wyschogrod, Greenberg, nor Klinghoffer deals with contemporary politics in his latest book. Nevertheless, political developments have surely helped spur their thinking. The liberal voting patterns of most American Jews, even those who care deeply about Israel, have led them to dissociate their fierce dislike of the Bush administration and the Christian Right from the remarkable support both have given to Israel. Orthodox Jews, by contrast, have become increasingly conservative in their political behavior; in many matters of public policy they now find themselves closer to conservative Catholics and evangelicals than they do to the Jewish establishment. And yet for them, too, there remains a psychological barrier to building alliances with believing Christians, one deriving from an age-old Jewish fear of Christianity's persecutions and an age-old Jewish disdain for Christianity's doctrines. In seeking to redress this situation as Orthodox Jews speaking to their fellows, writers like Klinghoffer, Wyschogrod, and (to some extent) Greenberg are thus operating in a political dimension even if it remains unexpressed.

It would take an Orthodox reader to judge their success. Yet even if I were such a reader, arguments formulated in terms of God's "purpose" or "perspective" would leave me, I suspect, uneasy. This is not because Orthodox Jews are barred from speculating about divine intentions but because such speculations, whatever their heuristic value for religious debate, are ultimately of limited persuasiveness.

The God of Judaism, after all, is portrayed as all-knowing and all-powerful; any theory of His hidden motives based on what we take to be the constraints of human history is therefore bound to founder on our constraining of *Him*. Was it God's plan to enlist another religion in spreading His message to Europe? Well, suppose it was. But why then did He not enlist a faith (like Islam) that, while abandoning the ritual rigors of Judaism, respected its ban on idols and its clear separation of the human from the divine, rather than one that taught its followers to kneel to statues of a god-man? What purpose of His was served by Christianity's turning viciously on His own chosen people? What kept Him, for that matter, from devising a different Judaism in the first place, one that would not have needed the mediation of other faiths for its promulgation?

As the Talmud is fond of saying about disputes that have no resolution, "*teyku*"—a word parsed by the rabbis as an acronym meaning, "Elijah the prophet [when he returns as a forerunner of the messiah] will solve all puzzles and conundrums." In the meantime, pretending to possess Elijah's knowledge is unlikely to convince the unconvinced.

BEYOND THIS, there is also something psychologically problematic about the "two-track" metaphor for Jewish-Christian relations that Klinghoffer, Greenberg, and Wyschogrod put forth. After all, although it is certainly possible to believe that certain principles or commitments are obligatory for oneself and not for another, it is sociologically questionable whether religious communities can function at any pitch of intensity with a "your religion is as good as mine" outlook.

It is also questionable whether treating the religion of others as good enough for them intrinsically reflects benevolence toward them. It is certainly the case that Jews—at least since Judaism ceased to be a missionary religion in the early Christian era—never sought to convert Christians as Christians sought to convert them; even in those places, rare until the modern period, in which conversion was possible, Jews did not expect, or even particularly wish, that Gentiles would find Judaism attractive. Yet as anyone raised in the Jewish tradition knows, this attitude did not exactly reflect a respect for Christianity. On the contrary: if Christianity was Judaism for the Gentiles, this was never meant by Jews as a compliment; the Gentiles, as far as most Jews were concerned, had merely gotten what they deserved.

Indeed, to ask either believing Jews or Christians to acknowledge that God does not care which of the two they are as long as they are one

* *Abraham's Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations*. This book was reviewed in the January COMMENTARY by David Hazony.

† *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity*. Jewish Publication Society, 274 pp., $20.00.

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or the other is subtly to demean both Judaism and Christianity in the eyes of their adherents. It may be high-minded to say, as Greenberg does, that "pluralism is not relativism, for we hold on to our absolutes; however, we make room for others' as well." But what does this actually *mean*? If I say, "The earth's orbiting the sun is an absolute for me, but I accept the sun's orbiting the earth as an absolute for you," how seriously am I taking either you, myself, or the solar system? The "two-track" metaphor makes sense only when its vantage point is situated above both tracks. At ground level, as it were, it involves an almost impossible bifurcation of vision.

Nor, if I were an evangelical Christian, would I be pleased with David Klinghoffer's reassurance that, even though my faith is based on a misunderstanding of God's word, it's a lucky thing, historically, that it is. In the first place I might retort, "What is history compared with everlasting life?" To which, if I knew some history, I might play the devil's advocate by adding:

"You say that the Jewish rejection of Jesus led to the development of Western civilization? *I* say that it impeded Western civilization, which would have developed more quickly, more prosperously, more peacefully, and with less injury to the Jews themselves had Christianity never existed.

"It may be true that Judaism was too arduous and exclusivist a religion to have become the dominant faith of Europe. But the choice in antiquity was not between Christianity and a crude or decadent paganism. By the 2nd and 3rd centuries C.E., paganism had developed religiously and intellectually sophisticated forms of worship that were not only moving rapidly toward a syncretistic, quasi-monotheistic theology but were doing so with a tolerance for diversity that Christianity lacked and an appreciation for the classical art and philosophy that Christianity was determined to suppress.

"In Christianity's absence, one or another of the pagan mystery cults that successfully competed with it until the reign of Constantine, such as that of Mithra or Isis, would have blossomed into a universal religion; become the dominant faith of Europe; inspired works of art and intellect no less sublime than the Christian ones; continued the classical intellectual tradition and thus, by encouraging the growth of ancient science, propelled the West into modernity far sooner; and so stopped the march of Islam not in Spain and at the gates of Vienna but in Egypt, Syria, and North Africa. There would have been no Dark Ages, no Crusades, no Inquisition, no Thirty Years' war, no anti-Semitism, no Holocaust, . . . and no salvation for my soul, whose eternal happiness is the only justification for Christianity's existence."

GO ARGUE! Counterfactual history is a game without rules, which means it can be neither won nor lost. Every version of it has its counter-counterfactual rebuttal, to which Klinghoffer's is no exception. It is hardly a structure solid enough to support a Jewish-Christian rapprochement.

But perhaps such structures are unnecessary. Orthodox Jews and evangelical Christians in America today indeed share much in common, from a belief in the Hebrew Bible and its account of the world to opposition to abortion on demand and gay marriage. They may not need grandly unifying theological or historiosophical bridges in order to build political alliances. They can agree on the desirability of state support for religious schools without seeing eye to eye on the compatibility of monotheism with the Incarnation; can rally behind President Bush's backing of Israel while continuing to argue whether the New Testament is a distortion of the Old.

Other Jews do not require such structures, either, but for a different reason. Unlike the Orthodox, who derive their social policies from their religious beliefs, most American Jews derive their religious beliefs, if they have any, from their social policies. With them, the argument that believing Christians are still, 2,000 years after the advent of Christianity, spreading faith in the God of Israel to the far corners of Africa and Asia will fall on deaf ears as long as the values preached in this God's name do not correspond with those of liberal America; and the plea to join hands with Christians in support of an American government that has shown unprecedented friendship for a Jewish state will move them only if they cease thinking of that state as illiberal, too. The language in which such Jews need to be talked to has perhaps yet to be found, but it is not the language of *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*.

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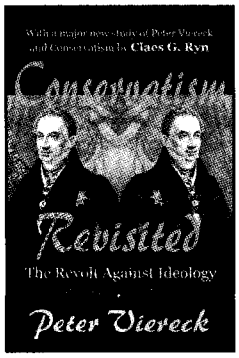
Peter Viereck

Pulitzer-prize Winning Poet, Critic, and Historian



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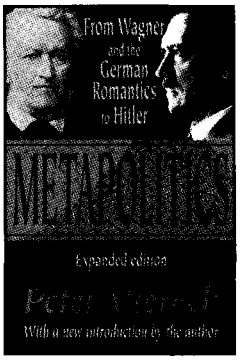
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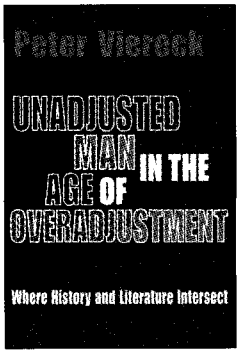

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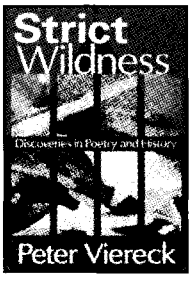

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Books in Review

Man with a Plan

The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time

by Jeffrey Sachs

Penguin. 416 pp. $27.95

Reviewed by
David Frum

IN REVIEWING Jeffrey Sachs's new book for a monthly magazine, one feels rather like the last bomber pilot over Yokohama. By the time one has arrived on the scene, the target has been so badly burned up that there is little left to aim at.

Sachs, who taught at Harvard for many years before becoming the director of the Earth Institute at Columbia, is an internationally renowned economist. In the 1980's and early 90's he advised the governments of Bolivia and Poland in their struggles with hyper-inflation and the government of the former Soviet Union in its transition to a market economy. Today he works closely with Kofi Annan and George Soros. His much-hyped new book (*Time* cover story, *New York Times* profile, *Foreign Affairs* excerpt) argues that a UN-managed global plan could end extreme poverty on this planet within two decades at a cost of between $135 and $195 billion per year.

There is much to be said in reply to this proposal. Indeed, much of it has already been said in scorching notices in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal*, to name just three. These early reviews struck similar notes. In the words of the *Washington Post* reviewer, William Easterly, who is himself a very distinguished expert on development:

> [Sachs] seems unaware that his Big Plan is strikingly similar to the early ideas that inspired foreign aid in the 1950's and 60's. Just like Sachs, development planners then identified countries caught in a "poverty trap," did an assessment of how much they would need to make a "big push" out of poverty and into growth, and called upon foreign aid to fill the "financing gap" between countries' own resources and needs. This legacy has influenced the bureaucratic approach to economic development that's been followed ever since—albeit with some lip service to free markets—by the World Bank, regional development banks, national aid agencies like USAID and the UN development agencies. Spending $2.3 trillion (measured in today's dollars) in aid over the past five decades has left the most aid-intensive regions, like Africa, wallowing in continued stagnation; it's fair to say this approach has not been a great success.

Or, as Claudia Rossett put it pungently in the *Wall Street Journal*:

> What [Sachs] basically proposes for the world's poorest countries, and for the 1.1 billion people who live in them, is a world-wide central plan for the new millennium—as if many of the world's most wrecked economies hadn't had enough central planning in the past millennium.

Rossett was not exaggerating. Sachs envisions a future in which the

DAVID FRUM *is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a columnist for* National Review Online.

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governments of poor countries and the UN will together be granted authority to direct massive tides of capital to industries ranging from health care to energy. He believes, for example, that technology companies have invested insufficient funds in photovoltaic cells and improved battery technology. Under his plan, the UN would correct this and other errors by putting money where he believes it should go. A half-century of failure does not discourage him.

Sachs similarly shrugs off the threat posed by bureaucracy and corruption, two forces that have crippled plans like his in the past. *This* central plan, he pledges, will be carefully constructed so as to minimize such structural problems. How so? Pretty clearly, Sachs envisions that the big bold planner will be someone much like himself—and he is unshakably confident that this godlike figure will get right what so many lesser minds before him have gotten wrong.

Sach's confidence on this score would be a little more infectious if he showed more awareness that his preferred methods *had* failed in the past. Unfortunately, on the evidence of this book, the history he knows best is his own autobiography. More than half its length is devoted to the story of Sach's career, detailing his successes and explaining away the failures (none of which, one learns, was in any way his responsibility).

BUT THERE is not much point in rehearsing counterarguments to the surging faith of the central planner. The more interesting question raised by *The End of Poverty* is a personal one: how is it that Jeffrey Sachs, a supremely intelligent man and a very capable economist, should have arrived at a position that has been decisively refuted both in theory and in experience?

One of the reasons surely does Sachs credit. He has traveled extensively in some of the world's poorest and most miserable places. Although his writing betrays little emotion, the suffering he has seen has clearly made a deep impression upon him. It has inspired in him that best and worst of all American impulses—the impulse to *solve* the problem *now*.

This same impulse undergirds Sachs's entire intellectual career. As an international economic adviser, he participated in two great successes: halting Bolivia's inflation in 1985 and freeing prices in Poland in 1989-90. In Russia, the results were much more mixed, though in fairness the circumstances he had to deal with there were uniquely intractable: decades of systematic misuse of human resources and capital across a vast continental state ruled by secretive elites whose highest priority was to transmute their political power into wealth.

In any event, it is clear that Sachs does best in addressing conditions—inflation, price de-control—that are amenable to abrupt, heroic action directed from a central point. Once he became interested in global poverty, it is therefore unsurprising that he would choose to define the problem as one to which his personal style would be well suited.

There is still another reason why Sachs would be attracted to so thoroughly discredited an approach to global poverty. He is a modern American liberal, deeply distrustful of nationalism and especially of American nationalism. "The richest and most powerful country in the world," he writes,

> long the leader and inspiration in democratic ideals, has become the most feared and divisive country in recent years. The self-professed quest by the United States for unchallenged supremacy and freedom of action has been a disaster, and it poses one of the greatest risks to global stability.

This ideological commitment has lured Sachs into an infatuation with the United Nations, obliging him thereby to subscribe to a debilitating series of illusions, evasions, and deceits. He is obliged, for example, to minimize and excuse corruption and misgovernment in Africa; to denounce the "depredations of colonialism" in harsh language even as he admits elsewhere that colonialism did not hurt African economies much, if at all; and to insist—despite Oil-for-Food—that the corruption and ineptitude of the UN are the fault not of the UN system, and certainly not of Secretary General Kofi Annan ("the world's finest statesman"), but of "powerful countries" unaccountably "reluctant to cede more authority to international institutions."

Like one of those unfortunate African countries Sachs yearns to help, he has ensnared himself in a poverty trap. But the poverty here is intellectual, the trap is of his own making—and external aid cannot save him.

Teller of Tales

A Strange Death
by Hillel Halkin
PublicAffairs. 400 pp. $26.00

Reviewed by
Midge Decter

IN 1970, Hillel and Marcia Halkin moved to Israel from New York. They had intended to settle on a piece of land overlooking Jerusalem, Halkin relates in his delicious new book, but that turned out to be too expensive. Then one day, moseying along the shoreline route from Tel Aviv to Haifa, they reached the Carmel foothills and happened on the old and, at that time, ramshackle village of Zichron Ya'akov. They stopped for a look around, met a

MIDGE DECTER's *recent books include* Rumsfeld: A Personal Portrait *and* An Old Wife's Tale: My Seven Decades in Love and War.

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couple of the residents, and, as he tells it, by the next morning had struck a bargain for three dunams of land (about two-thirds of an acre).

Anyone familiar with Halkin's sharply attuned sensibilities—on regular display in the pages of Commentary—would find it hard to believe this account of how he and Marcia more or less blindly happened on their future home. She, he assures us, was in full accord with this impulsive move, and, though a city girl, surprised him by being the first to suggest it. But then, near the end of the book, as the Halkins are packing up to leave for a stay in Jerusalem, he quotes her as denying this version of events, asserting that they came to Zichron Ya'akov intentionally and took a few days deciding.

In any case, if ever a place was created to capture and burnish the abiding literary-historical fancies of Hillel Halkin, Zichron Ya'akov was it. For as it turns out, along with being a critic, one of the major translators of modern Hebrew literature, and a brilliant (if occasionally quirky) commentator on the current Israeli scene, he is an insatiable lover of old mysteries and secrets, of things passed down from lip to ear, and of the detritus, physical as well as cultural, that such things leave behind.

Zichron Ya'akov was one of the first modern Jewish towns in Palestine, settled by a group of Romanian Jews in 1882. The earth on which the immigrants chose to plant themselves was, to put it mildly, unfriendly. However difficult life had been in Romania, it had failed to prepare these adventurers for the kind of hardship they now put themselves in the way of. In all likelihood, the community would soon have been abandoned had not the Baron Edmond de Rothschild taken it, and certain other nearby settlements, under his grand but rather dictatorial wing—or, as Halkin so unforgivingly puts it, had not "a generation after the freeing of the Russian serf and the emancipation of the American slave, Jewish settlers in Palestine indentured themselves to the youngest son of a parvenu family of French nobility."

Under the supervision of the Baron's minions, a certain order was successfully imposed in Zichron Ya'akov; agriculture, primarily viniculture, got established, and following the vines a winery. Moreover, if those early settlers cannot be said to have made a brilliant success on their own, they did play an essential role as embodiments of the romance of Zionism—the romance that was, indeed, essential to keeping alive an as yet barely breathing ambition to create a Jewish state in Palestine. However willing they may have been to knuckle under to some parvenu nobleman, these

To Jewish Hungarian Victims of Nazi Persecution and their Heirs

A Class Action Settlement Could Affect You

PROPOSED SETTLEMENT A class action lawsuit, *Rosner, et al. v. United States of America*, involving personal property looted from Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust is pending in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida ("Court"). A settlement of the lawsuit could affect you if you or your relative might have had property on the Hungarian Gold Train. If the Settlement is approved and you qualify, you may be able to apply for assistance from Jewish social service agencies. Or, you can object to the Settlement by informing the Court of your objections. Or, if you so choose, you can exclude yourself from the Settlement altogether.

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT? The Hungarian Gold Train consisted of twenty-four freight cars containing personal property seized by the Hungarian government during World War II from Hungarian Jews, which was taken into U.S. custody in May 1945 in Austria. The U.S. has agreed to settle claims that it mishandled this personal property. The Settlement is not an admission of wrongdoing or an indication that any law was violated.

WHO'S INCLUDED? You are a Class Member if you are a Jewish Hungarian victim of Nazi persecution who might have had property on the Gold Train, or the heir of such a person.

WHAT DOES THE SETTLEMENT PROVIDE? The U.S. government has agreed to pay up to USD $25.5 million to fund the following three items: (i) approximately USD $21 million for social services that will benefit Jewish Hungarian Nazi victims who are in need (proposed plan will be available on website on June 10, 2005); (ii) USD $500,000 for the collection of documents and artifacts relating to the Gold Train and the looting of Hungarian Jews; and (iii) lawyers' fees and expenses, and incentive awards for Named Plaintiffs, in an amount not to exceed USD $4 million.

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS? If you stay in the Settlement and are a Jewish Hungarian Nazi victim, you may be eligible for benefits. Even if you are not currently in need, you may stay in the Settlement to allow the funds to assist other Jewish Hungarian Nazi victims who are. You may file comments or objections to the Settlement which will be available for the Court's review prior to any final decision regarding the Settlement by the Court. Unless you exclude yourself from the Settlement, you will be legally bound by it and not able to sue the United States. If you exclude yourself, you will not be eligible for benefits. Any communication related to the Settlement – comment, objection, exclusion request – must be in writing, postmarked no later than August 1, 2005, and conform to specific Court requirements. You may appear through counsel of your choosing at your own expense. An information package from the contacts provided below, describes the specific requirements for such communications.

WHEN WILL THE COURT ACT ON THE SETTLEMENT? The Court will hold a fairness hearing on this proposed Settlement on September 26, 2005, at 10:00 a.m., at which time it will consider whether to approve the Settlement and the lawyers' request for fees and costs.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: This is only a summary of a Court-approved Settlement Agreement. The full terms of the Court-approved Settlement Agreement govern. Please check the website for periodic updates on this Settlement at www.HungarianGoldTrain.org. To contact Class Counsel, please email: brent@hbsslaw.com.

To see the full terms, or to request instructions for exclusion from, commenting on, or objecting to the Settlement please go to:

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same people also participated in the great and difficult feat of turning the Hebrew language into the everyday vernacular of the modern Jewish population of Palestine. Without Zionism there would have been no Israel; but without Hebrew—as who knows better than Halkin, a Hebraist and the descendant of Hebraists—Zionism would have remained unanchored and adrift.

When the Halkins set up house in Zichron Ya'akov in the early 1970's, a few of the children of the first Romanian settlers were still around, now old, needy, and for the most part engaged in nursing their memories while a busy new world passed them by. Little could they have imagined that they and their memories were about to be set upon by a young American immigrant hungry to become acquainted with both. Nor did the town suffer from a shortage of detritus to be pried into. The dead of early Zichron Ya'akov seem to have gone to their eternal rest leaving behind in careless array many of their earthly goods, such as they were. Even after the passage of a half-century or more, there was to be found in its byways a variety of rotting barns, boarded-up houses, abandoned and broken-down farm equipment, even a deserted hotel that had once served as a resting place for intrepid early tourists from abroad.

IN SHORT, Zichron Ya'akov was a snoop's paradise, and among his many other accomplishments Hillel Halkin is clearly one of the great snoops of the age. Even if it were true that he happened on the place by accident, this would clearly have been a case of deep calling unto deep.

He quickly began to wander around the town, not scrupling to push in rotted doors or climb through dust-covered windows, sometimes taking possession of long-deserted objects that caught his fancy: papers, old soda bottles, a wagon wheel, a discarded wine barrel, photographs, books, even the carved wooden frame of a fireplace that he managed to pry from its base and cart home. He also spent time gossiping—or rather making himself the cause that brought long-forgotten gossip to the lips of others—chatting up anyone who promised to produce something: an old lady sunning herself on the front steps here, an old man riding a donkey there. And he read gravestones.

One day in his wanderings, Halkin came upon a careworn little book about a woman named Sarah Aaronsohn. The book was titled *Sarah, Flame of the Nili*. Its authorship was ascribed to "A Simple Soldier" (who turned out to have been Sarah's brother Alexander). If the early-Zionist romance of Zichron Ya'akov seems to have left Halkin a little cold, he was easily overtaken by the romance of a great crisis that gripped the town in the second decade of the 20th century.

This was the saga of a conspirator named Aaron Aaronsohn, his band of fellow conspirators, and his project to help drive the Ottoman Turks out of the Holy Land. Aaronsohn was an agronomist who had become world-famous for discovering a new strain of wheat. He also happened to believe (both correctly and incorrectly) that the only hope for the establishment of a Jewish state lay in a victory of the Allies over the Ottoman empire in World War I. To that end, he organized a network consisting mainly of his sister Sarah, regarded locally as a very glamorous figure, his brothers Tsvi and Alexander, certain neighbors, and two close friends from nearby villages named Avshalom Feinberg and Yosef Lishansky. Their mission was to spy for the British, who were then in Egypt preparing to invade Palestine through the Sinai desert.

Aaronsohn himself went to Cairo, and there set up a system for receiving information from his associates back in Palestine. The group called itself Nili,* and there are serious differences of opinion about the value of the information it was actually able to provide the British—though the fact that, after the war, Aaronsohn was invited to Versailles to witness the treaty negotiations would suggest that the British had found it useful indeed.

The British aside, however, the members of Nili found only spotty support within the surrounding Jewish population at home. In some cases the impediment was a politically motivated disagreement with their activities; in others it was simple fear of Turkish vengeance. Somehow, whether the Nili agents were betrayed by neighbors or whether the Turks themselves uncovered the conspiracy, the group was found out.

One day in October 1917, as some of the spies emerged from their hiding place to celebrate the festival of Sukkot with their families, the town was surrounded by Turkish soldiers and they were seized. A couple were sent off to Damascus for trial. Sarah, however, was held in Zichron Ya'akov and tortured day and night, her screams echoing without letup through the streets of the town. On the fourth day, her jailers granted her permission to return home for a change of clothes, and once there she took a pistol that had been hidden away and killed herself. Aaron Aaronsohn himself died a few years later in a plane crash over the British Channel.

THE STORY of Nili, of the fate of Nili, and especially of the opposition to Nili on the part of some Palestinian Jewish leaders was to remain alive for years to come. In certain political circles, it is alive down to the present day. How could Hillel Halkin, the seeker of old objects and tales, not have fallen in some way under its spell, encapsulated in the mystery of the group's possible betrayal?

Sarah Aaronsohn's life had been

* A Hebrew acronym for the biblical phrase, "the Glory of Israel does not deceive."

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touched by at least some of the romantic glamor that the town's gossips ascribed to it. She had been married to a merchant in Turkey; when the call to join Nili came, she abandoned him and returned to Palestine to volunteer. Espionage is in itself a romantic occupation, and once Nili got under way there were rumors of amorous goings-on. Sometimes the rumors connected Sarah with Avshalom Feinberg, sometimes with Yosef Lishansky. And then there were the horror and heroism of her death, aspects that with the passage of time ungovernably turn to romance.

The little volume Halkin found about Sarah Aaronsohn was to give a focus—and a kind of end point—to his seemingly tireless poking-around. But the object of his newly ordered curiosity was neither Sarah Aaronsohn nor her suicide but another death that was—or was it?—connected with the events of those same terrible days. For without naming names, the author of *Sarah, Flame of the Nili* had suggested a tale of guilt and betrayal and retribution whose further pursuit Halkin found it impossible to resist—and it is that pursuit which more or less forms the plot of this book.

Meanwhile, of course, the Halkins had a life of their own, built a house, made friends, had two daughters—the elder of whom is portrayed accompanying him on some of his explorations—and must have occupied themselves with everyday things. Moreover, there was writing to do, and translating, and making a living. Although one gets the impression from this book that Hillel Halkin's quest to own the past of Zichron Ya'akov, and particularly the story of that "strange death," held sway throughout, this could not have been quite true.

After all, at least some of the people on whose memories he had to depend must have grown feeble, or perhaps even died. And the town itself as he first knew it was rapidly slipping away, morphing into a condominium-dotted bedroom community for people working in Haifa, with all that implies of shops and coffee houses and theaters and so on—in other words, no longer a place so amenable to the high art of snooping. Indeed, one of the problems resulting from the story's having stewed in Halkin's mind for so long is that both the story itself and his cast of characters tend at times to become rather confusing. There are so many of the latter, both dead and alive, and they do so much meandering in and out of the former, that the reader sometimes forgets what to ascribe to whom.

Not that this does much to interfere with the enormous pleasure to

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be derived from this book. For one thing, the characters who fill its pages, with or without a connection to the story, are fascinating and amusing (and sometimes moving) in and of themselves. Some of them were indeed long dead by the time Halkin happened along: Yosef Davidesco, for example, who was later shot by the Stern Gang and who once disguised himself as an Arab and sneaked into Jordan to avenge an attack on a Jewish colony, was found out and had to escape, and two years later returned with policemen to round up the attackers. Many others were still on hand, like old Tishbi the vintner, who continued to roam the town by donkey, or Carmeli the druggist, Asheri the greengrocer, or the Baer brothers, known locally after their two shops as Gift Bear and Wine Bear, or Zvi Zuckerman, a retired bus driver who had managed to sustain over many decades a passionate feud with Zvi Rosenzweig that had begun in the early days of the British Mandate.

And most of all there was Yanko Epstein the teller of tales. Epstein was the keeper of the flame of the Zichron Ya'akov museum, a basically one-room establishment consisting almost entirely of old photographs taken of the town's founders on various occasions. He it was who promised to provide the final key to the past that Halkin was seeking. In this book he is also a creation—or, granting Halkin's reportorial pretense, a subject—worthy of the best of comic Jewish literature.

Epstein was reputed among the Zichronites to be the best source of information about what happened in town after Sarah Aaronsohn killed herself. He tantalizes Halkin with the possibility that he might at any moment supply this information, all the while exploiting him and his car for trips to visit old friends in various outlying communities. In the car and out, he talks and talks, mainly bragging in an outrageously entertaining style about his past exploits: as a sometime friend and defender of a neighboring Arab chieftain and a sometime plotter against him, as an adventurer, a horseman, a wily negotiator among thieving enemies, and as the daring and practiced lover of certain wives in the area. Sometimes Halkin claims to be irritated with Epstein for being so dilatory about getting to his, Halkin's, point. But if the portrait is anywhere near accurate, Epstein was surely the happiest of authorial discoveries; and if it is in any important sense an invention, he is just as surely an occasion for justified authorial pride.

In any case, whether real or romantically embellished, Epstein and the others, and the town of Zichron Ya'akov they inhabit, will provide any reader with the pleasure of high entertainment played out against a background of unending historical interest. For this reader in particular, it is the (probably unintended) portrait of Halkin himself, peerless observer, unswervable and indefatigable nudnik, that in the end provides the book's greatest and most surprising source of delight.

False Prophet

God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It

by Jim Wallis

HarperSanFrancisco. 384 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
James Nuechterlein

THE DEMOCRATIC party has a religion problem. According to recent polling data, Americans who belong to churches vote for Republicans over Democrats by substantial margins; those who worship every week do so overwhelmingly. Self-described secularists, by contrast, are mostly in the Democratic camp. This religion gap—otherwise described as a morality or values gap—has set off a debate within Democratic circles.

Some argue that the party should, more or less literally, get religion. It should disavow secularism, affirm belief, and demonstrate its affinity for religious values by reconsidering its opposition to such public expressions of faith as voluntary school prayer or displays of religious symbols in public spaces. Moreover, it should, at a minimum, show more flexibility on issues that mobilize traditionalist Christians against it, abortion and same-sex marriage in particular. Only in this way, it is argued, can the party rid itself of its image as the instrument of intellectual elites dismissive of the beliefs and values of ordinary Americans.

Others, zealous of defending clear boundaries between church and state and resistant to conservative religion, argue for a redefinition of what is at issue. The party, they say, should not and need not move to the Right either theologically or politically; it should instead recast the debate over morality in terms that replace conservative values with those of the Left. "Social-justice" Christianity ought to take precedence, in moral terms, over the platform of the religious Right.

Enter Jim Wallis, a prolific writer and noted speaker who is editor-in-chief of *Sojourners* magazine and the head of Call to Renewal, a national federation of churches and religious organizations focused on the issue of poverty. Wallis, as much as anyone can, bridges the differences among Democrats. He is an evangelical Protestant, which means he is not subject to the immediate suspicion of *theological* heterodoxy that attaches to politically leftist members of mainstream churches. Even if he does very little of the personal "witnessing" to his faith in Jesus that is characteristic of evangelicals, his politics can be assumed to be an

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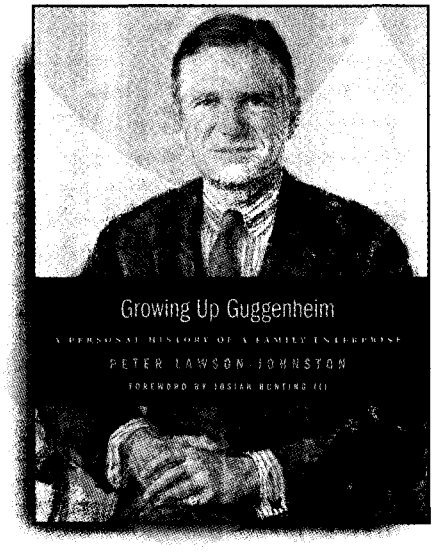
expression of that faith, not a substitute for it.

At the same time, however, he is an avowed opponent of the religious Right and, for the most part, a reliable exponent of a left-wing set of policies, which he expounds in fervently moral and religious terms. Even before last November's election he had appeared before the Democratic party's platform committee where he was received, by his own testimony, with considerable enthusiasm. Since the party's disaster at the polls, he has frequently been cited by Democratic leaders, and this best-selling post-election book, *God's Politics*, is spoken of in highly respectful fashion.

Wallis himself expresses some uneasiness with this state of affairs. He does not deny his opposition to the religious Right, but he insists that this does not necessarily locate him on the religious Left. As his book's subtitle indicates, he wants to place himself above and beyond ideological or partisan attachments. *God's Politics* begins and ends with a plea for a rethinking of the relation between religion and public life, one that will give religion a central place in political debate. The book's middle sections connect the "spiritual values" Wallis advocates to the full range of pressing issues of the day, from international relations to economic and social justice. In brief, he stands for a "prophetic" politics that, in his view, will challenge the standard assumptions of Right and Left alike, and lead to social change grounded in biblical truth.

There is something—though not nearly as much as he would have it—in Wallis's denial of ideological captivity. He does reprove some on the Left for their "secular fundamentalism," and he offers the odd jab at theological liberals for doctrinal laxity and lack of spiritual depth. He also sprinkles his leftist political agenda with occasional gestures toward conservatism: the Left, he says, sometimes underestimates the seriousness of the post 9/11 terrorist threat, while on domestic issues it is too dismissive of conservative concerns regarding abortion, family stability, individual responsibility, moral character, and cultural decadence.

But these conservative gestures are notable for their infrequency; they are footnotes and afterthoughts in an otherwise determinedly left-wing argument. The limits of Wallis's concessions to the Right are revealed in his discussion of abortion. Chiding Democrats for their pro-choice rigidity, he urges them to be "much more respectful and welcoming" of pro-life advocates; but his handling of this issue, the only



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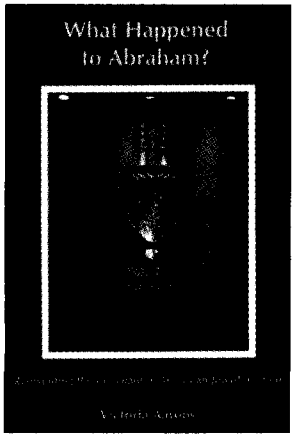

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one on which he presents himself as an unequivocal conservative, is strikingly evasive.

To begin with, Wallis never mentions either *Roe* v. *Wade* or the issue of partial-birth abortions. Moreover, he makes it clear that when it comes to public policy, he opposes "criminalizing an agonizing and desperate choice." He would require nothing further of Democrats than that they cooperate with Republicans in reducing the rate of abortion by working on "teen pregnancy, adoption reform, and real support for low-income women." Finally, he leaves no doubt that abortion (and related issues like gay marriage) pales into insignificance next to truly imperative moral concerns like poverty and war. All told, Wallis's challenge to the Left on abortion is more tepid than prophetic.

The disingenuous nature of Wallis's "beyond-Left-and-Right" stance is captured even more fully in an ad initiated by his religious community that ran in some 50 newspapers during the 2004 presidential campaign. Entitled "God Is Not a Republican, or a Democrat," the ad—reproduced in *God's Politics* and elaborated on in detail—opened with an attack on leaders of the religious Right for invoking God in support of the reelection of George W. Bush. Sincere Christians, the ad's signers proclaimed, could vote for either Bush or John Kerry, and could do so on explicitly religious grounds; the real test was how the candidates measured up on a broad range of issues, which the ad proceeded to list and describe.

These included, among others, poverty ("Do the candidates' budget and tax policies reward the rich or show compassion for poor families?"); the environment ("Do the candidates' policies protect the creation or serve corporate interests that damage it?"); the war in Iraq ("Do the candidates' policies pursue 'wars of choice' or respect international law and cooperation in responding to real global threats?"); and terrorism ("Do the candidates adopt the dangerous language of righteous empire in the war on terrorism and confuse the roles of God, church, and nation? Do the candidates see evil only in our enemies but never in our own policies?").

A moment's perusal of this litany of "religious issues," each of them framed in a similarly tendentious manner and accompanied by presumably appropriate biblical citations, would persuade any half-aware voter that God is most certainly not a Republican and that, while He might not be a registered Democrat, that is definitely the way He would be voting this time around.

IN TREATING the Bible as a textbook in political economy, Wallis is strikingly unaware of how he mirrors his opponents on the religious Right, whose propensities in this regard he equals if he does not exceed. In almost every case, he knows with blessed assurance what God requires. "A budget based on a windfall of benefits for the wealthy and harsh cuts for poor families and children is," he proclaims, "an unbiblical budget." With similar confidence he asks, in righteous indignation, when it was that Jesus became "pro-war and pro-rich"? Nor is it only Jesus to whom Wallis makes biblical appeal for validation of his politics. We are informed, in extended detail, of what the prophet Amos would make of the Enron scandal, of the prophet Micah's "vision" of national and global security, and of Isaiah's "platform" for properly biblical federal budgets. At one remarkable point, Wallis contrasts Micah's plan for world peace with that of Donald Rumsfeld; Rumsfeld does not come off well.

Close observers of Wallis suggest that he has, in recent years, modified the radical politics that were his from the 1960's into the 1990's. That may well be true on domestic issues. In his student days, after all, he was a member of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS); the attacks one

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hears from him on capitalism today are more nuanced than those that were second nature to SDS, and his policy nostrums sound more mainstream-liberal than radical.

In his discussion on poverty, for example, Wallis balances his call for greatly expanded government funding and regulation with an acknowledgment of behavioral problems among the poor that contribute to their own difficulties. Significantly, though, he does not inform his readers that he strongly opposed the welfare-reform act of 1996—legislation that, more than any other effort in recent memory, represented precisely the combination of public and private initiatives he supports in theory.

But whatever moves Wallis has made toward the center on domestic issues, where foreign policy is concerned he retains much of the radicalism of his youth. Although he concedes that terrorism is a genuine threat, and that we are all better off without Saddam Hussein, that is the limit of his sympathies for U.S. interests in the world. America's role abroad, in his view, has been one of unremitting error and folly since the 1960's. Under Republican and Democratic administrations alike, "U.S. foreign policy has been morally flawed at its core." In every American intervention anywhere on the globe during those years, "there was no worthy goal to be pursued, and any notion of 'defending' America was only cold-war propaganda."

Wallis makes moral judgments on every hand, but it is always America and its allies that are most culpable. In the Middle East, for example, the U.S. has blocked opportunities for peace by its one-sided support of Israel. Palestinian terror is wrong, but not nearly so wrong as the disproportionate "state terrorism" practiced by the Israelis. Wallis's favorite analogy for the Israel-Palestinian situation is South Africa before the fall of apartheid.

Such wretched political judgments are offensive enough in themselves; they are intolerable when garbed in moral and religious language. And this makes one wonder whether the Democrats are wise to anoint Jim Wallis as their favorite theologian. His modestly revised social gospel may serve some of the party's purposes, but his habit of wrapping politics in religion is the very inclination that liberal Democrats so fervently denounce in others. And for a party already suspected of fecklessness on issues of foreign policy and national security, it would hardly seem prudent to select as its moral paladin a man who makes George McGovern look like a hard-liner.

Enemies Ignored

Blind Spot:
The Secret History of
American Counterterrorism
by Timothy Naftali
Basic Books. 367 pp. $26.95

Reviewed by
Andrew C. McCarthy

International terrorism, particularly the variety engaged in by transnational, militant Islamic networks, is the defining national-security problem of the modern era. But was it an avoidable problem? Have we, in effect, had a hand in creating this Frankenstein monster by nodding, winking, and consciously avoiding it for decades? And have we, as a libertarian society, been undone at critical turns by a recurring ambivalence about the need for competent intelligence collection—both at home and abroad?

Andrew C. McCarthy *is a senior fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.* *Correspondence on his article, "Free Speech for Terrorists?" (March), begins on page 12 of this issue.*

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These are the hard questions taken up by Timothy Naftali in *Blind Spot,* an engaging and impressively comprehensive history of American counterterrorism. Naftali, a scholar who has specialized in the 20th-century history of U.S. intelligence, outlines the metastasis of today's terror threat, illustrating how, for nearly a half-century, American administrations subordinated the problem in favor of other exigencies, or committed themselves to managing rather than defeating it.

The roots of American counterterrorism, Naftali recounts, can be traced to the European theater of World War II, and particularly to the Allied intention of stymieing the efforts of German intelligence to blunt the Allied advance and, once defeat was inevitable, to sow the seeds of insurgency during the subsequent occupation. The Americans, neophytes at the craft of counterespionage, learned from British intelligence how to glean the secrets of hostile forces. This early history reverberates through all that follows.

Most critically, in midwifing U.S. counterintelligence, the British wanted the FBI to be in the forefront, and pushed for an experienced FBI agent to be placed in charge of a new unit of the fledgling Office of Strategic Services (OSS) that would specialize in foreign counterintelligence. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, however, vetoed the concept, leaving the mission to the OSS, which evolved into the CIA in 1947. Here, in Naftali's reading, lay the seed for the often ferocious rivalry between the two principal U.S. intelligence agencies, and for the dubious division between domestic and foreign counterintelligence that would prove so harmful in the ensuing decades.

Similarly profound was another World War II-era decision. The OSS component dealing in foreign counterintelligence (called X-2) was very successful, particularly in discerning that the Nazis had no real stomach for a determined postwar insurgency. But it created resentment among the OSS brass, who coveted control over intelligence assets in the field. Consequently, the birth of the CIA spelled the dismantling of X-2 in favor of what today remains the basic chain of command: officers (generally with diplomatic cover) reporting to station chiefs, who in turn report to headquarters. This may avoid the modern *bête noire* of intelligence "stovepipes," but it also detracts from the dynamism of the arrangement.

BUILDING ON this foundation, Naftali shows how much of our blind spot about terrorism is structural, stemming from an instinctive resistance to sensible security measures and a tendency to overreact to inevitable mistakes and excesses. Thus, for example, hijackings remained a menace in the 1960's and early 1970's largely because remedies like security screening and air marshals were, for years, unthinkable. Both government and the airlines calculated that it was better to endure the occasional plane being taken to Cuba than to risk crippling the industry with steps that might depress air travel.

This resistance to sensible security measures was compounded by the intelligence scandals of the Vietnam era, which included domestic spying on war protesters. The ensuing "reforms"—really, over-corrections—of our intelligence operations severely compromised the CIA's effectiveness. They also induced the FBI to adopt protocols that prevented it from collecting even open-source information about persons inside the U.S. unless they were credibly suspected of connection to criminal activity or a foreign government. In due course, the supposed remedies led to the cataclysmic intelligence failures of the 1990's and to 9/11. And yet, even as we continue to pay the price, our culture resists modest protective measures like the Patriot Act.

But misgivings about the necessities of good security and intelligence are only part of the story. Successive administrations have been even more reluctant when it comes to discouraging terrorist savagery. As Naftali correctly observes, "this is a struggle that we do not like to fight." Not only do we still hotly dispute just how consequential terrorism is, we have regularly allowed other imperatives—meeting the Soviet challenge, ending the Vietnam war, the quixotic quest for Middle East peace—to sap any sense of urgency about the terrorist threat. During the cold war, policy-makers habitually viewed terror factions as pawns in the larger strategic chess game rather than as blights to be eradicated, or indulged the happy delusion that terrorists might be transformed into statesmen.

In this connection, as Naftali deftly sketches, a tension has long existed between high-level government leaders and mid-level bureaucrats. The former have tended to focus on the big-picture items: missile defense, stability in strategically important regions, the emergence of China's military-industrial complex, and the like. The latter, with whom Naftali's sympathies lie, have more accurately perceived worrisome trends and brought them to the attention of their higher-ups, who just as regularly have ignored them.

Sometimes the tension has led to a kind of kabuki dance. With those for whom terrorism is inevitable but manageable—Naftali homes in on two National Security Advisers, Henry Kissinger under Nixon and Zbigniew Brzezinski under Carter, and on Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger under Reagan—the tendency has been to advise the President to ignore or distance himself from the issue. The prevailing political wisdom seems to have been that a President would have little to gain from expending capital on non-strategic threats, but much to lose if a deadly attack occurred af-

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ter he had publicly associated himself with counterterror efforts.

To compound matters, mid-level officials themselves have had conflicting motivations. Naftali cites several, including Rudolph Giuliani as an assistant attorney general in the Ford era, John Poindexter as Reagan's deputy National Security Adviser, and Richard Clarke, whose status as counterterrorism coordinator waned from the Clinton to the current Bush administration, who were impelled to push the issue onto the plates of their skittish principals partly out of a sense of dread, but partly out of a need to elevate the prestige of their own portfolios.

Whatever its source, and however complicated its dynamics, the national ambivalence over counterterrorism has had dire results. Failures to respond to atrocities, whether out of fecklessness or miscalculation, have bred more atrocities.

In March 1973, for example, Yasir Arafat ordered the murders of two American diplomats in Sudan. This was an act of war—yet, by autumn, Nixon and Kissinger had convinced themselves that, because the PLO seemed to exhibit restraint in the Yom Kippur war, Arafat might be a "moderate" after all. Back-channel communications were therefore opened, and they remained open even after one of Arafat's factions slaughtered 21 schoolchildren in the Ma'alot massacre the following year. For the next quarter-century, as Arafat's hands grew ever bloodier, American administrations continued enabling him.

Analogously, Hizballah guerrillas murdered 241 American marines in their barracks in Lebanon in 1983. Retaliation was called off, principally by Weinberger—who, Poindexter told Naftali, worried about such possibilities as a misfire of Tomahawk cruise missiles; the Syrians, he feared, might retrieve the missiles, with their then-new technology, and hand them on to the Soviet Union for reverse-engineering. The Reagan administration likewise failed to respond to Hizballah operations, including the murder of a U.S. seaman during a 1984 hijacking; naturally, the terror organization only became more audacious. As for the ineffectiveness of the Clinton administration in responding to al Qaeda's attacks on our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and on the *U.S.S. Cole* in Yemen in 2000, that is a twice-told tale.

Compounding our lack of a stick has been our all-too-quick readiness to extend a carrot. While much is made rhetorically of the boast that we do not negotiate with terrorists, history, as Naftali demonstrates, is replete with just such bargaining. In fact, it was official American policy until 1973, when Nixon (in a fit of pique, according to Naftali) first announced the "no negotiation" policy. But the new stance did not prevent such egregious misjudgments as Reagan's efforts to buy peace with Hizballah by arming its sponsor, Iran, or Clinton's determination to compel Israeli concessions to Arafat as the *intifada* raged.

The salient question raised by a book of this kind is whether the exhaustive, laser-like focus on a single subject distorts its dimensions. September 11 was a liminal event. Its prism cannot but magnify prior missteps that, in the facility of hindsight, now appear as clear danger signs. But would a greater American effort at counterterrorism have been worth it if it had detracted from, say, defeating the Soviet Union? It is impossible to say for certain.

Nonetheless, Timothy Naftali convincingly demonstrates that, at each step of the way, more and better was possible. For that reason alone, his study should become essential reading as we chart the way forward.

In God's Creation

Gilead

by Marilynne Robinson

Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 247 pp. $23.00

Reviewed by
Thomas Meaney

Men of the cloth are playthings for novelists; they come outfitted in the vestments of their own unraveling. From Chaucer onward, they figure in our literature as frauds, fools, and, more often than not, perfect hypocrites. Thus, a contemporary author seeking to depict a decent man in the form of a wise old Iowa minister would seem to be setting her sights ambitiously high. It is hard enough to create a sympathetic character in line with any Christian doctrine, still harder to fashion one who also appeals to even the vaguest secular notions of virtue; but in both these undertakings, Marilynne Robinson has in some measure succeeded.

Robinson is not ambitious in the ordinary sense. She has written one highly regarded novel, *Housekeeping* (1981), but no more fiction until now. In the intervening decades, she has produced two books of non-fiction: *Mother Country*, a severe exposé of a nuclear plant in England that (unlikely as it seems) garnered her both a lawsuit from Greenpeace and, as a consequence, a British embargo, and an unfashionable collection of essays, *The Death of Adam*, in which she argued, among other things, that psychoanalysis, laissez-faire capitalism, and Darwinian determinism were all irreconcilable with Christianity.

The Death of Adam is at times a facile book—part of its power lies in Robinson's knack for pinpointing the weaker arguments of Christianity's critics—but also refreshing in

Thomas Meaney *reviewed V.S. Naipaul's* Magic Seeds *in the March* Commentary.

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its general spirit of revisionism and its revaluation of John Calvin in particular. Even among Protestants, Calvin's reputation persists as the embittered apologist of predestination, a doctrine that supposedly undermined the idea of free will by positing that each man's fate is predetermined by God. In contrast to this grim picture, Robinson presents a Calvin who not only eschewed his own doctrinal authority but transformed the city of Geneva into one of the most tolerant places in Renaissance Europe. While upholding the inviolable sanctity of the Bible, Calvin, according to Robinson, allowed for more literary readings of the text, often choosing to juxtapose conflicting interpretations of its lessons rather than settling for a simple or exclusive meaning. This relish for moral complexity also pervades Robinson's new novel, *Gilead*, where it guides a narrative remarkable for its masterly control.

Gilead, WHICH won this year's Pulitzer prize for fiction, is written in the form of a long, discursive letter composed in 1956 by John Ames, a seventy-seven-year-old Congregationalist minister suffering from heart disease. Ames has remarried late in life and wants to communicate his accumulated experience to his seven-year-old son before he dies. "Sometimes I almost forget my purpose in writing this," he says, "which is to tell you things I would have told you if you had grown up with me, things I believe it becomes me as a father to teach you."

Ames's letter also serves to tell his son of his own "begats," and of the "lore of old gallantry." Ames's grandfather, a staunch abolitionist, moved the family from Maine to Iowa in order to maximize his usefulness to the cause. His son—Ames's father—was also a preacher, but a pacifist who rejected his father's militant evangelicalism, only to be chastised by the old man for appeasing the Jim Crowism that surfaced in the decades following Reconstruction; the burning of a Negro church sends the old abolitionist back on the warpath. Ames himself, although he admires his grandfather's fiery, new-heavens-and-new-earth brand of Congregationalism, is his father's son: when the influenza epidemic of 1918 strikes the country, he sees it as a plague sent by God to keep young American men from having to fight in World War I.

Born into a line of preachers, Ames was prematurely pious; one of his earliest memories is of baptizing a litter of kittens: "I still remember how those warm little brows felt under the palm of my hand. . . . For years we would wonder what, from a cosmic viewpoint, we had done to them." He has cultivated this same sense of wonder throughout his life—a wonder not based in static, inward reflection but rather conditioned by observation of the outside world. He has a generous eye for details:

> You and [your friend] Tobias are out in the yard. You have put your Dodgers cap on the fence post, and the two of you are chucking pebbles at it. Accuracy will come, probably. "Ah, man!" says T., and screws up his face and does a tightfisted dance of frustration, as if he had achieved a near miss. Now off you go to gather more pebbles, Soapy tagging after at a fastidious distance, as if she had some business of her own that happened to be taking her more or less the same direction.

Such delight in the natural and human world might seem out of character for a strict Calvinist, but that is precisely Robinson's point: Ames is a voluptuary for God's creation. His most precious memory is of meeting his second wife, a much younger, uneducated woman with whom he fell deeply in love after a brief courtship. Mrs. Ames is a mysterious feminine presence in the novel; she hovers above the narrative fray as a Mary Magdalene character, whose "sorrowful" past Ames curiously chooses not to probe.

The plot of *Gilead* centers on the return to town of John Ames Boughton, Ames's godson and the prodigal son of his best friend. (The name of the town is clearly intended to elicit an echo in the reader's mind of the prophet Jeremiah's rhetorical question, "Is there no balm in Gilead?") Ostensibly, Boughton has returned to visit his father, who, like Ames, is dying. Up to this point, the book has been full of Ames's theological speculations mixed with prairie nostalgia, but Boughton brings a challenge to Ames's faith itself, and on several fronts. Ames sees him as an interloper, "a man not of the highest character" who, he worries, may usurp his own place in the family when he is gone. (Boughton is roughly the same age as Mrs. Ames.) His suspicions are not unfounded: an impish prankster in his youth, Boughton had crowned his career by impregnating a poor country girl and leaving it to his family to make amends; the Boughtons' repeated attempts to help were stubbornly rebuffed, and the baby died.

By the end of the book, the racial theme of *Gilead*, initiated in the story of Grandfather Ames's abolitionism, comes full circle: Boughton, we learn, has a new son with a black woman in St. Louis, whom he cannot support and about whom he is afraid to tell his ailing father. Consulting Ames for spiritual advice, he deliberately provokes the minister with questions about predestination, a doctrine that Ames does not even try to defend. Max Weber famously argued (in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*) that Calvinist determinism ultimately encouraged Protestants to strive to outdo one another in good works, to the point where they loudly broadcast their piety to their neighbors rather than privately channeling it to God. Everything Ames says, however, contradicts this. "I am one of those righteous for whom the rejoicing in heaven will be com-

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paratively restrained," he tells his son, evenly balancing assertiveness with humility.

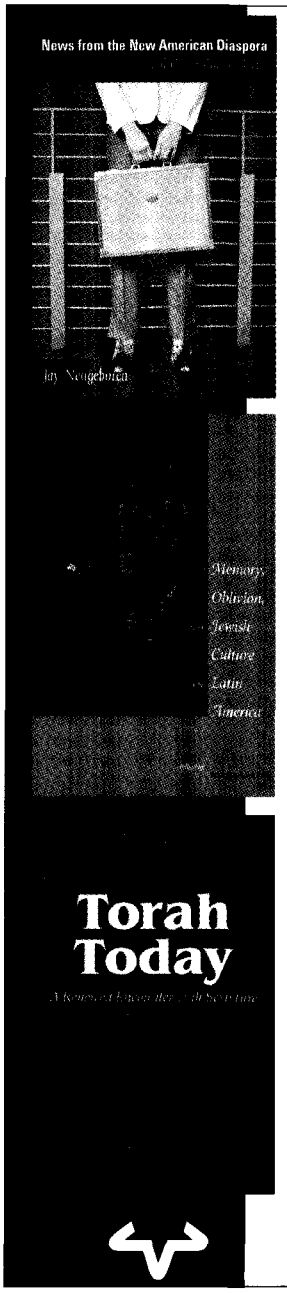
Still, he is at pains to restrain himself from condemning Boughton, who is patently seeking theological justification for his own moral lassitude. "Do you think some people are intentionally and irretrievably consigned to perdition?" he asks Ames, smiling. Though he gets no answer, Ames does privately suspect that some people "never really repent and never really reform." In this sense, the idea of predestination strikes him as intended to reflect the limits of human judgment and the infinitude of God's. But that hardly nullifies man's self-determination. When Boughton finally decides to leave town without telling his father about his new family, Ames, giving him his blessing, meditates on one of the ironies of Christianity: "It was truly a dreadful thing he was doing, leaving his father to die without him. It was the kind of thing only his father would forgive him for." "Father" here resounds with double meaning.

Although *Gilead* closes on a calm note, Ames has still not satisfactorily resolved his own besetting conflict, which is how to reconcile the compassion he knows he ought to feel for mankind in general with his love of the two people closest to him. "I can tell you this," he writes to his son:

> if I'd married some rosy dame and she had given me ten children and they had each given me ten grandchildren, I'd leave them all, on Christmas Eve, on the coldest night of the world, and walk a thousand miles just for the sight of your face, your mother's face.

Ames is being intentionally irreverent and, in toying with the belief that a Christian should love strangers as his own family, too easy on himself. Yet he reminds us nonetheless of how inescapably such moral tensions affect even the blithest and the most irreligious among us; and in making us feel their terrible significance, he wins our sympathy for the stubborn seriousness of his own struggle to understand the meaning of moral experience and to live by that understanding.

Robinson has said she started writing as a college undergraduate in order to prove that stories worth telling were being played out in the remoter corners of the country. As with Willa Cather, Wallace Stegner, and (on a lesser plane) Norman Maclean, the religious tenor in her work comes with the territory. But Robinson differs from her Western and Midwestern peers in the depth of her theological concerns. While some of her writing may seem homiletic, even quaint, she also



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achieves moments of near-Melvillean grandeur and dazzling lucidity, where her meandering syntax reaches for metaphors that are not only vessels of her religious faith but also an invitation to engage it.

Heaven, for Robinson, may afford an extraordinary amnesty for sinners. But *Gilead* also argues that, in this world, moral responsibility lies squarely on the individual's shoulders, and cannot be shifted to any modern malaise; men must ceaselessly inquire into their motives and their conduct, without exculpating themselves in the process. Conveying this message by means of delicate moral unveilings, softened by Midwestern reticence, Robinson offers a convincing picture of what the good life might look like, and suggests it may actually be attainable. Though not easily won, there is balm after all in Gilead.

Urban Experiment

Ladies and Gentlemen, The Bronx Is Burning: 1977, Baseball, Politics, and the Battle for the Soul of a City

by Jonathan Mahler

Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 356 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Fred Siegel

THE SUMMER and fall of 1977 were an extraordinary time in New York. Even as crime reached record highs and morale sank to new lows, the city amused itself by watching the Yankee manager Billy Martin scuffle in the dugout with slugger Reggie Jackson. While the Yankees were battling for the pennant, the larger-than-life political figures of Edward I. Koch, Mario Cuomo, and Bella Abzug duked it out for the mayoralty.

Covering this scene was a *New York Post* newly made over into a racy right-wing tabloid by Rupert Murdoch. Its staff had plenty of other things to write about, what with the arrival of disco, punk rock, Studio 54, Plato's Retreat, and numerous gay bath houses. As for crime, if the commonplace variety was not enough, there were such lurid stories as the nearly systematic torching of dying neighborhoods, the Son of Sam serial murders, and widespread looting after a summer blackout. New York City, the *New York Times* columnist Vincent Canby remarked, had "become a metaphor for what looks like the last days of American civilization."

Jonathan Mahler, a young journalist, has vividly recaptured those months in an enjoyable, fast-paced account that, Hollywood-like, cuts back and forth among the different elements of the city's ongoing soap opera. His title comes from the moment in the second game of the 1977 World Series when, with much of the nation watching, ABC's cameras caught one of the periodic arson fires raging out of control in nearby areas. The sportscaster Howard Cosell commented, in his trademark nasal singsong: "There it is, ladies and gentlemen, the Bronx is burning."

THE POLITICAL side of Mahler's story begins with the frumpy, hapless mayoral incumbent, Abraham Beame, who had been warned repeatedly by banks that the bill was coming due for the spending spree in which the city had indulged under his two immediate predecessors, Robert Wagner and John Lindsay. Though he had served as comptroller under Lindsay, and was elected on the slogan, "he knows the buck," Beame undertook some transparently foolish measures. Rather than cutting social services, he laid off 5,000 police officers—betting that the federal government would prefer stepping in to help out financially to facing the embarrassing prospect of rioting in the nation's largest city. But President Gerald Ford saw no need to respond to this self-destructive logic.

Mostly, Beame stalled for time, hoping that a Democrat would win the White House in 1976 and ride to his rescue. Blaming the city's fiscal problems on everyone from the banks and evil Republicans to a Washington "whispering campaign," he was thus one of the first major figures to endorse the presidential candidacy of Jimmy Carter, and would play a key role in Carter's victory. Publicly and privately, Carter promised to repay this favor with a "massive effort" in federal aid; at the start of his general election campaign, buses in New York were plastered with this solemn vow. But once in office, Carter turned his back on Beame; instead, there came from Washington a scathing report by the Securities and Exchange Commission that produced the *Post* headline, BEAME CONNED THE CITY.

In the meantime, and despite its economic woes—since 1969, New York had lost 570,000 private-sector jobs—the city's own politics barely budged. The early front-runner against Beame in the 1977 mayoral race was Congresswoman Bella Abzug. A denizen of Manhattan's Upper West Side, she championed the right to strike of all public employees, including the police, and promised to rehire anyone who had been laid off. The other contenders included Cuomo, who had made a name for himself by mediating a nasty housing dispute in Forest Hills, Queens, and Koch, then a little-known liberal congressman who was making an issue of crime and moving to the political center.

Then, on a sweltering July day, lightning struck the Consolidated Edison generators and caused a blackout. Pandemonium followed—

FRED SIEGEL *is the author of* The Prince of the City: Giuliani, New York, and the Genius of American Life, *just out from Encounter.*

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and the mayor's race was transformed. Rioting and looting erupted in 31 neighborhoods. The area hardest hit was Bushwick in Brooklyn, already a place where truck drivers and firemen had to rely on police escorts in order to perform their jobs and where officers on patrol did not walk too close to buildings for fear of having bricks dropped on them from the rooftops. As the sun went down, the looting in Bushwick began. An emergency call for back-up forces went unanswered by 40 percent of the city's off-duty cops. In the morning, the mob was even larger. Neighborhood stores, including those owned by blacks and Hispanics, were thoroughly gutted.

The city's numerous civil libertarians responded to the rioting by focusing on the mistreatment of arrested looters; for her part, Abzug explained away the violence as a product of socio-economic forces and excessive military spending by Washington. Most New Yorkers, however, were shaken. New York magazine asked, "Can New York Survive?" Voters began to mock Abzug, and as the city slipped out of her familiar liberal orbit, she grew testy.

Koch, by campaigning against the police officers who had failed to show up and the "poverty pimps" and "hacks" who lived off the failing city government, now emerged from the pack. A self-described "liberal with sanity," he also had the gift of *shtick*, of being genuinely entertaining. He invited voters to laugh at the absurd discrepancy between the utopian rhetoric of the Mario Cuomos and Bella Abzugs and the dystopian reality of day-to-day life in the city.

Mahler concludes his story on a positive note. Koch won his race; and so did the Yankees as the egomaniacal Reggie Jackson, the team's first black superstar, cracked three home runs on three first pitches in the final game of the World Series. In politics as in sports, Mahler suggests, these twin victories signaled the rebirth of a plucky and ever-resilient city.

Mahler is at his best in describing memorable New York scenes like Jackson's World Series heroics. In another fine vignette, he gives us the outsized Bella Abzug, arrayed in "white polka dots and a Calamity Jane hat" as she delivered a campaign speech at the Continental Baths. To the hundreds of men "wearing nothing but towels held together by Bella buttons," she said: "I'm sorry I'm not quite dressed for the occasion."

Unfortunately, Mahler does not do nearly so well in connecting the two main poles of his book, politics and baseball. Although he clearly means to suggest that both had been undone by the racial and social currents flowing out of the 1960's, he never quite says so. This in turn may be connected with his wish to end on a more hopeful note, on a hint of tensions relieved and problems resolved. Arriving at such a conclusion, however, requires leaving out significant parts of the picture.

We learn from Mahler, for instance, that as soon as the Yankees won the World Series, the hometown crowd stormed the field. What he does not tell us is that the fans proceeded to tear up the turf and trash the stadium, while Jackson himself had to punch his way into the dugout.

Nor did 1977 mark much of a new beginning for the city as a whole. Indeed, it teetered on the edge of bankruptcy into the 1980's. There were many things that could have been done to reverse this decline, but few were. Mayor Koch's proposals to eliminate welfare fraud, trim the wildly overstaffed public hospitals, and reform the civil service went nowhere, shelved after confronting widespread liberal hostility and threats of further racial riots. What largely kept the city afloat in those gloomy days was the inflation of the late 1970's, which

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reduced the cost of its debt, followed by Reagan's deregulation of the financial industry, which set off a boom on Wall Street.

A virtue of Mahler's account is its reliance on contemporary newspaper coverage to re-create the feel of the era. This, however, also proves a failing, since it leads him to recycle claims advanced by the press that were not only groundless but seriously misunderstood the sources of the city's problems. Thus, Mahler accepts the argument of his favorite sources, the columnists Jack Newfield, Pete Hamill, and Jimmy Breslin, that their hero Mario Cuomo was beaten in the 1977 mayoral race because Koch was able to exploit Cuomo's opposition to the death penalty. It is true that Cuomo himself constantly harped on this theme, but Koch, who supported capital punishment, ran no radio or TV ads on the issue. He did not have to.

What the public liked most about Koch was his mockery of "nutty liberals." His most successful ad began: "Abe Beame says he should be reelected to finish the job. Hasn't he already done enough?!" Koch won because, in the wake of the blackout and the looting, he spoke for a middle class that had been regularly attacked as bigoted for daring to complain about paying the highest taxes in the country in order to support a municipal government unable to pick up the trash but responsible for a welfare system that had loosed anarchy on the city. Even the editorialists at the *New York Times* had begun asking whether the city might, after all, be "a failed urban experiment."

The New York debacle gave the entire liberal establishment an opportunity to rethink its policies. Ted Kennedy was moved, briefly, to talk about the crushing effects of welfare dependency, while Jesse Jackson spoke out against black-on black crime. But the moment passed, the chance for a turn was missed, and Mario Cuomo gave the old liberal jalopy a fresh coat of paint. Having failed to win the mayoralty, he would go on to twelve years in the governor's mansion in Albany. There he would deliver many memorable speeches but few significant accomplishments. In the meantime, the city had to languish another decade before tackling its problems.

Jonathan Mahler has no sense of the opportunity that presented itself and was lost in 1977, or why it was lost. For that reason, *The Bronx Is Burning*, although a good read, is a disappointing book.

Bench Press

Men in Black: How the Supreme Court Is Destroying America

by Mark R. Levin

Regnery. 288 pp. $27.95

Reviewed by
Dan Seligman

THE FOLK wisdom about the U.S. Supreme Court has long held that, in Mr. Dooley's words, it "follows th' illiction returns." The proposition now before the people is that it does precisely the opposite: it ignores, overturns, and supplants the handiwork of our elected officials. This case is ordinarily, although not exclusively, made by outraged conservatives, and two of them have recently launched their laments from the *New York Times* best-seller list. Newt Gingrich, in *Winning the Future* (which I reviewed in the May COMMENTARY), argues that the "power grab by the Court is a modern phenomenon and a dramatic break from all previous American history." Mark R. Levin makes a somewhat similar case, but in far greater detail.

A constitutional scholar, Levin is president of the Landmark Legal Foundation, a powerful presence on New York's talk-radio station WABC, and, on the evidence of this book, a take-no-prisoners polemicist. *Men in Black* has an introduction by Rush Limbaugh and an afterword by former U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese, and Levin kicks off his own argument with a slash-and-burn preface titled "Men, not Gods." It features discreditable personal details about fifteen Supreme Court justices, from James Wilson (appointed by George Washington and jailed for debt while on the court) to Thurgood Marshall (appointed by Lyndon B. Johnson and said to have spent his afternoons watching soap operas).

From that point forward, Levin takes on the Court in fourteen spirited chapters, collectively intended to demonstrate that America has an ongoing political disaster on its hands. The country has been transformed, Levin says,

> from the most representative form of government to a de-facto judicial tyranny. . . . Judges have abused their constitutional mandate by imposing their personal prejudices and beliefs on the rest of society. And we, the people, need not stand for it.

WRITING ABOUT Supreme Court decisions for large audiences is a tricky proposition, especially if, like Levin, one is a judicial conservative. What makes it tricky is the irresistible tendency of most educated laymen to judge Court decisions by their own intuitive feelings about what is right and wrong—and not by constitutional standards. In an opening chapter, "Radicals in Robes," Levin works hard at getting his readers to focus on this elementary distinction. He asks them to identify with "originalists" who look to the text of the Constitution and the intent of its framers, and to reject the "activists" who construe the Constitution broadly and are more concerned with getting to their own "desired outcomes."

DAN SELIGMAN *is a contributing editor of* Forbes.

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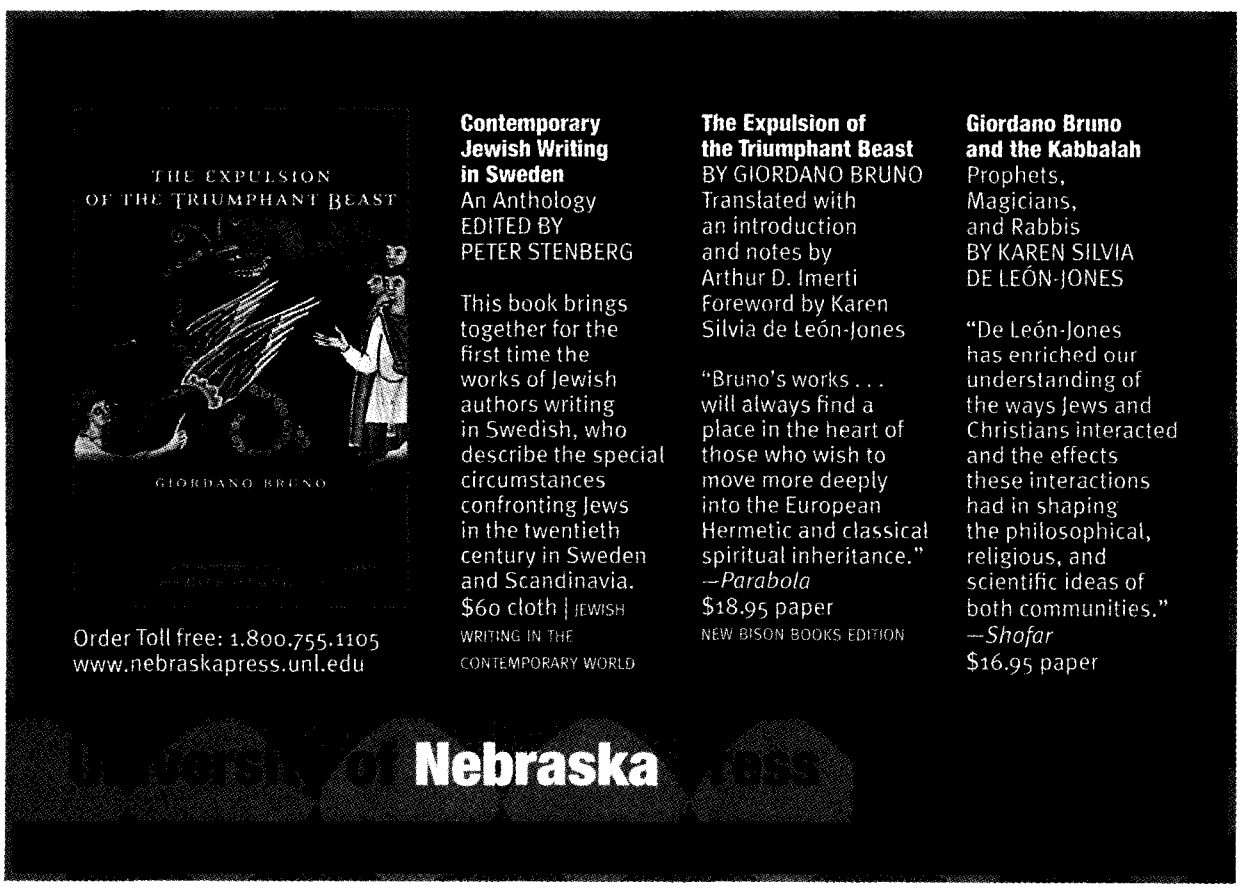
Among the catastrophes created by the activists, Levin focuses on four landmark decisions. They are *Dred Scott* v. *Sandford* (1856), which held that a slave was not a citizen and therefore had no standing to sue for his freedom in court; *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* (1896), which upheld a "separate but equal" version of state segregation laws; *Korematsu* v. *United States* (1944), which legitimized the Japanese internments during World War II; and *Roe* v. *Wade* (1973), which legalized abortion throughout the land.

Next, Levin tees off on "judicial review," i.e., the right of the Supreme Court to overturn legislation passed by Congress and state legislatures. Here he argues that no such right was contemplated by the Founding Fathers, and also that *Marbury* v. *Madison* (1803), the case that became the precedent for judicial review, was not intended by Chief Justice John Marshall, who wrote the opinion, to serve any such purpose.

Successive chapters assail the fruits of judicial activism across the political landscape: in thwarting public displays of religion; in discovering nonexistent "privacy rights" in the Constitution (and then, in a massive non sequitur, determining that privacy requires a right to abortion); in the Court's rejection of state and local laws barring sodomy; in its long and bewildering romance with affirmation action and school busing; in its insistence on rewriting laws about the rights of immigrants (legal and otherwise), even though Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution explicitly assigns naturalization issues to Congress; in its willingness to open American courts to foreigners captured abroad as enemy combatants; in its stretching of Article I's commerce clause to allow endless regulation of the private economy; in its unfathomable interpretations of the First Amendment free-speech clause (through opinions allowing flag-burning as legitimate political expression while restricting old-fashioned political speech when it runs afoul of campaign-finance law); and, finally, in unnecessarily intervening in the 2000 presidential election.

In dealing with this panoply of issues, Levin generally proves eager not only to berate the activists but to elucidate the logic behind their views and to track the incremental steps by which they took us (typically) from conservative legislation to desired liberal outcomes. How did it come about, for example, that illegal aliens gained a right to social-welfare benefits? We learn from Levin that in the early 20th century, the Court took for granted that citizens could be preferred over noncitizens in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many different contexts. Thus, in 1915 it upheld New York's right to reserve transit-authority jobs for citizens, while in 1927 it specifically rejected the proposition that the Fourteenth Amendment's equal-protection clause applied to aliens.

But in the civil-rights revolution of the 1960's and 70's, powerfully abetted by the Warren and Burger Courts, this logic fell off the table. A decision written in 1971 by Justice Blackmun held that "classifications based on alienage, like those based on nationality or race, are inherently suspect and subject to close judicial scrutiny"—a standard, often impossible to meet, requiring legislators to demonstrate a "compelling government interest" in any rules disadvantaging aliens. In 1976, the Court held unanimously that it was unconstitutional for the federal government to bar aliens from civil service jobs. In a critical 5-4 decision written by Justice Brennan in 1982, it held that Texas could not bar the children of *illegal* aliens from its public schools. The decision was based on the equal-protection clause, which meant that it also applied to social benefits for all aliens (including the illegals).

ON MY reckoning, Levin plainly wins most of the arguments he has engaged in this book, but in several instances he leaves his readers adrift. Many will surely be confused, for example, by the inclusion of the *Plessy* decision on his list of activist calamities. The opinion today looks like a racist outrage, but in 1896 it surely did not exemplify activism on the march. It represented Supreme Court *deference* to a state legislature—which is precisely what Levin's overall position would seem to call for. Instead he contends that the Court should have invoked the Fourteenth Amendment's equal-protection clause to strike down Louisiana's "separate but equal" laws.

In a world where segregation was taken for granted, and "separate but equal" came across as relative enlightenment, any such opinion would have been activism squared. So what is Levin up to? My own hunch is that he senses a debater's need occasionally to embrace causes dear to liberals (as he also does in attacking *Bush* v. *Gore*), thereby establishing that his brand of judicial conservatism is not just a stalking horse for political conservatism. But the effect is a bit of a muddle.

Far more disappointing are the book's shaky responses to two critical questions. The first is: *why* has the Court become so chronically activist? Near the end of *Men in Black*, Levin finally gets around to this question in a chapter titled "Liberals Stack the Bench." His answer mainly has to do with assorted plots by Senate Democrats, in league with Left-liberal pressure groups and Left-liberal editorial writers, all conspiring against conservative nominees. The chapter also complains mightily (and plausibly) about the unfairness of Senate rules that can prevent an up-or-down vote on obviously qualified candidates.

But none of this responds to the case Levin himself has laid out in his earlier chapters, which depict an institutional bias toward activism by sitting judges, many of whom (including seven of today's nine members) were appointed by Republican Presidents. Indeed, many of the Justices prominently identified with activism in the modern era—including Earl Warren, William Brennan, and Harry Blackmun—were Republican nominees and were expected to be judicial conservatives. Why are there so many surprises after confirmation, and why are all the surprises in the same direction?

A related question: how does a Robert Bork (Yale law professor, solicitor general of the United States, appeals-court judge) come to be identified as "outside the mainstream" and rejected by the Senate while a Ruth Bader Ginsburg (movement activist, director of the ACLU's Women's Rights Project) sails through the confirmation process without controversy? The answers to these question are far from clear, but one would expect Levin at least to acknowledge their existence.

A final question: what do we do about activism run amok? Levin says up front that we do not need to put up with the abuse of power, but he does not deliver much in the way of specific remedies. In a penultimate chapter on "Restoring the Constitution," he considers several possibilities. One is more frequent use of the cumbersome impeachment process, which he sensibly views as "ill suited for a systemic reform of the judiciary." In another approach, Congress would incorporate limits to judicial review in new legislation—something it has already done in a few cases (e.g., the Marriage Protection Act). But here the problem, as Levin admits, is getting the Court to abide by these new limits on its role.

Having discussed these and other possibilities at length, he finally serves up his own proposal in a single sentence: "The most meaningful step Congress could take would be a constitutional amendment limiting the Supreme Court's judicial power by establishing a legislative veto over Court decisions—perhaps a two-thirds vote of both houses." But this comes perilously close to just giving up. Constitutional amendments, which themselves require two-thirds votes in both houses, plus ratification by three-quarters of the state legislatures, are today nearly impossible to pass in the absence of a landslide national consensus, which manifestly does not exist in this case.

The awful truth is that Levin, and quite a few others who essentially accept his analysis, do not exactly know what to do about the problem he has put onstage. Which suggests it will be around for quite some time.

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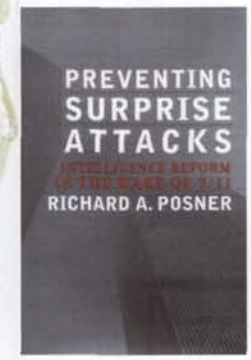

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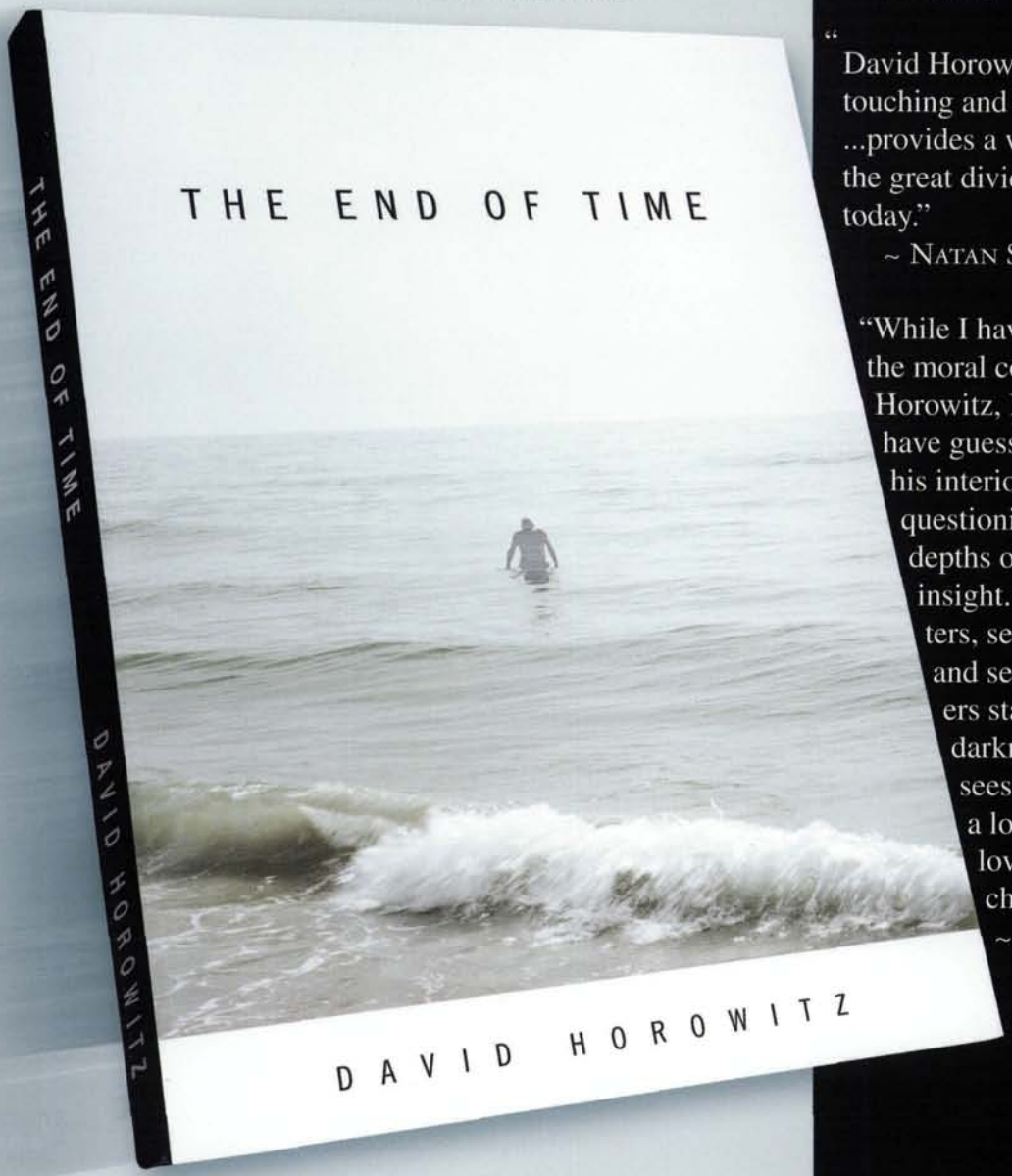

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